SPECIAL TIME EDITION

The Power of Kindness

Creating a Better Life and a Better World

Small Acts, Big Impact

Spreading Kindness in a Rude World

Mastering Self-Forgiveness

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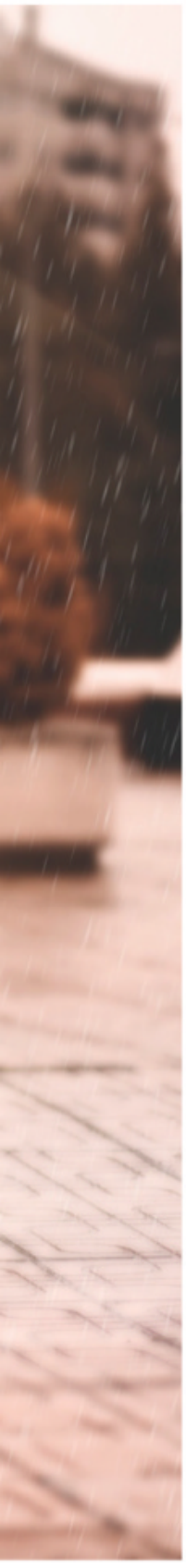
The Candle *of* Kindness

BY JEFFREY KLUGER

DON'T BELIEVE what you've always been told about kindness coming for free. "Be nice," people say. "It costs you nothing." To which evolution says: "Spare me." ¶ The world is a pitiless place—with limited resources and a scramble to survive and the red-in-tooth-and-claw savagery of it all. If you're going to make it out alive, you've got to fight for what's yours. Every dollar you spend or calorie you burn or hour you lose that's not devoted to you and your immediate gene pool is a dollar or calorie or hour wasted. So evolution makes



Kindness has been evolutionarily hardwired into us for millennia.

us selfish, and evolution makes us greedy, and evolution makes us . . . makes us . . . who are we kidding? It makes us kind too.

We are a species that is defined by our contradictions—bloodlust and charity, ugliness and empathy, a taste for slaughter and a talent for tenderness. It's strange and it's head-spinning, and it's nothing at all like so much of the rest of nature, which is efficiently designed to eat, breed, fight and kill, to wring as much from life as possible in the time it's got and to hell with everything else.

Certainly, kindness itself is evolutionarily adaptive. We are a social species—entirely dependent on one another for shelter, food, child-rearing and the rarer, higher, less-quantifiable quality of simple love. So we do nice things for other people, and other people do nice things in return, and in the process we pay it forward in a virtuous cycle that's been playing out since *Homo sapiens* first emerged on the savannah 300,000 years or so ago.

That's not kindness, say the reductionists. It's what's known as reciprocal altruism—an entirely transactional business of making deposits in the favor bank with the understanding that you can later make withdrawals as needed.

A similarly mechanistic process drives another side of human nature—our tendency toward tribalism. The favor bank is fine within my family and social circle—the people with whom I share my home and food and genes. But a similar band of people on the other side of the valley? Every resource they take from nature is one less resource my people get. Every fig they pick or buffalo they hunt reduces my tribe's take. And if you don't believe they're less deserving of all those riches, well, just look at the way they dress or just listen to their gibberish-like speech. Just look at the color of their skin, so much darker or lighter or browner or whiter or ruddier or pinker than my own.

In their new book *Survival of the Friendliest*, husband-and-wife research scientists Brian Hare and Vanessa Woods include a chapter called, chillingly, "Not Quite Human," about our species' tendency not just to demonize the alien other but to animalize the other, seeing people outside our circle as not even a part of the larger *Homo sapiens* community. In doing so, we ignore what is called our theory of mind, our innate understanding that other people have joys and pains and fear just like we do.

As Hare and Woods explain in their work, we evolved the ability "to dampen the activity of the mental network that produces the unique features of our theory of mind. This allows us to blind ourselves to the humanity of people outside our group when we feel threatened. This blindness is a far darker force than even prejudice. Unable to summon empathy for outsiders, we feel no connection to their suffering."

From this comes genocide. From this comes slavery. From this comes the lowest impulses born in the lowest places in our minds and hearts.

And yet what explains the highest impulses born in the highest places? What explains soldiers who dive on grenades to save platoon-mates, sacrificing their own lives—and all the eating and breeding and gene-reproducing that go with it—to ensure life to others? What explains the first responders who dash into natural disasters when the floodwaters are still rising or brave the sites of terrorist attacks when the fires are still burning, putting their welfare in danger to save strangers? What explains all of the health care providers who are risking—and in some cases losing—their lives to stay at their posts during the coronavirus pandemic?

Similar, if less mortal, choices face us all every day—and we so often choose well. Billionaires give half of their wealth to charitable foundations. Individuals give what's in their pockets to homeless people on a street corner. We volunteer at soup kitchens and church fundraisers. We hold open doors and help strangers who slip on the ice and rush to administer CPR or call 911 if a stranger on a bus suddenly falls ill.

And we teach that kind of goodness to our children—children who have their own internal angels and demons that will pull them in different directions throughout their lives. That, perhaps, is our greatest goodness. Not just our retail kindness, our in-the-moment acts of charity and love, but our commitment to see that all of those sweet impulses survive us, building a better, richer, kinder species as the ages roll on. ◻

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The Science of Kindness

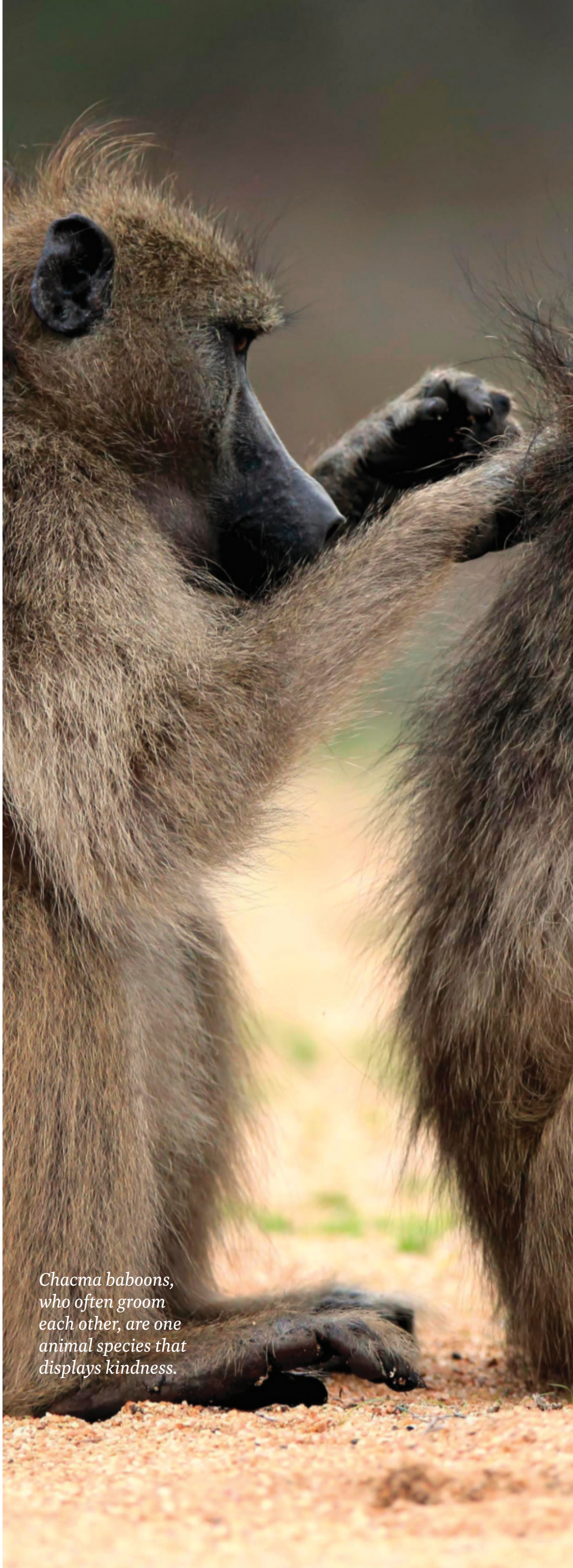
In October 1965, Chicago-born Milton Olive III and other members of the U.S. Army's Company B 3rd Platoon encountered heavy gunfire in the jungle of Phu Cuong, Vietnam. After his unit survived the barrage and began to push forward, Olive, who was 18 years old, was fighting alongside four other soldiers when a hand grenade landed in their midst. He smothered the grenade with his body—sacrificing his life but saving the lives of his companions. Olive was the Vietnam War's first African-American Medal of Honor recipient.

Olive's death is an example of "altruistic suicide"—a term for the actions of those who give their lives to save others. While his sacrifice was extraordinary, it is not unique. According to military records, dozens of Medal of Honor recipients have died shielding their fellow soldiers from grenade blasts.

Giving one's life for the benefit of others may be the ultimate act of human kindness. But day-to-day life is replete with far smaller yet still selfless acts of generosity—including many that are exchanged between strangers. A driver waits and waves, allowing another to merge; a pedestrian gives money to a homeless person on a street corner. Where do these unselfish impulses come from? How could natural selection have favored this human inclination to put others' needs ahead of one's own? One possible answer: our own needs—or at least our species' needs—are served too. Experts say the roots of human kindness are tightly interwoven with those traits and tendencies that both define *Homo sapiens* and have enabled us to succeed.

"I think the evolutionary case for human decency is pretty straightforward," says Joshua Greene, a professor of psychology at Harvard University and the author of *Moral Tribes: Emotion, Reason, and the Gap Between Us and Them*. "We evolved to be relatively nice because it helps us form teams, and teams are more likely to survive than isolated individuals."

Compared with many other mammals, humans are neither exceptionally strong nor swift nor stealthy. We lack imposing teeth and talons. Our five senses are comparatively blunt instruments. But what we lack in brawn and sensory acuity, we make up for—and then some—with our capacity for cooperation and collaboration. Indeed, what sets us apart from every other animal—what could be called our supreme advantage as a species—is



Chacma baboons, who often groom each other, are one animal species that displays kindness.

The Evolution *of* Kindness

Natural selection drives us to be kind—even when it comes at a very high price

BY MARKHAM HEID

our ability to act in concert toward a shared goal. And that concerted action is built on a foundation of kindness and, when circumstances call for it, a willingness to give less to ourselves than we do to the group. Such an ability is undeniably to our credit, but that doesn't mean we ought to get too full of ourselves about it.

"We've evolved to be cooperative, and in some ways to forgo benefits even when we know that we can get away with a selfish thing," Greene says. "But this capacity for altruism is the product of ruthlessly competitive evolutionary processes."

THE GENESIS OF KINDNESS

Kindness may be found in abundance in humans, but it's hardly unique to us; the animal kingdom offers many examples of selfless or cooperative behavior. Baboons groom one another, and vampire bats will share food (that is, regurgitated blood) with nonkin group members. But while some forms of altruism turn up elsewhere in nature, the human predisposition toward kindness and generosity is still unusual, especially when unrelated strangers are involved.

This predisposition likely stems from our highly evolved capacity to engage in give-and-take transactions built on trust and reciprocity. "Reciprocal altruism is the sort of umbrella term for all sorts of two-person cooperation," says Leda Cosmides, a distinguished professor of developmental and evolutionary psychology at the University of California, Santa Barbara. "I do something for you, and my hope is that, later, you'll do something for me." The benefits of this sort of ledger-balancing interaction are obvious: there's strength in numbers, and humans who can band together—to hunt, to defend themselves, to build shelter—are more likely to survive and thrive than those who go it alone. But to locate the earliest traces of kindness, it's necessary to go deep into the mists of prehistory—back to a time long before modern humans walked the Earth.

"The most basic sort of kindness is toward kin, and perhaps the most basic of these relationships is the mother-child bond," says Harvard's Greene. The offspring of kind, selfless mothers would have been more likely to survive and pass on these gentle genes than the offspring of unkind mothers. And, over time, evolutionary pressures must have expanded these altruistic behaviors to encompass extended family members and eventually nonfamily group members. "It can be a successful strategy to be nice to people who may be nice back to you, even if they're not kin," Greene says. "If I pull you out of a river when you're drowning, and you do that for me, we're both better off." While these sorts of within-group courtesies show up in other animals, in no species are kindness and cooperation so pronounced as they are in humans.

Just when the first *Homo sapiens* emerged is uncertain, but perhaps the most commonly cited estimate is about 300,000 years ago. "From the get-go, I would be comfortable saying that kindness was probably important," says Frank McAndrew, an evolutionary psychologist at Knox College in Galesburg, Ill. "I think kindness, and also the ability to monitor this tendency in other humans, has always been a part of our nature. It's one of the things that made us who we are."

McAndrew says that, at some level, kindness must have been sexy. Anyone who doubts this is underestimating the role that sexual selection plays in encouraging the proliferation of certain traits while discouraging others. "With evolution, the only thing that matters is getting genes into the next generation," he explains. "If you're in possession of qualities that will help you reproduce, those will be passed on." Directly or indirectly, kindness must thus have helped early humans secure sexual partners. It's easy to see how a gentle, selfless mate may have been more appealing than a cruel one. "If you're a kind, cooperative person, that would have made you a valued member of a group, which would have translated to being a more attractive partner," he says.

Directly or indirectly, kindness helped early humans secure sexual partners. A selfless mate is more appealing than a cruel one.

As early human communities expanded in size, altruistic behaviors would have become even more advantageous. "In places with small social groups where people can't really get away from somebody

Experts agree that humans are kind to one another because it helps them work together.

that's being cruel or exploitative, they just have to put up with [that behavior]—at least up to a point," says Cosmides. Cutting loose an unkind or unscrupulous group member could weaken the group's ability to acquire food or protect itself from competing bands of humans, and so this sort of excommunication likely happened only when a person was severely hostile or untrustworthy, she says. But in larger communities—those in which people have the ability to pick and choose whom they interact and mate with—kindness would have mattered even more. "People start to compete to be seen as good and trustworthy, because you don't get the good cooperative partners if you're seen as a mean, lying son of a bitch," she explains.

The more altruistic members a group or community possessed, the more likely it was to succeed. "In the evolution of our species, groups with altruistic cooperators outcompeted groups with fewer altruists," says Lynn O'Connor, a clinical psychologist and director of the Emotion, Personality and Altruism Research Group at the Wright Institute in Berkeley, Calif. She says that, in this way, both individual-level and group-level evolutionary pressures helped encourage people's prosocial nature.

If altruism and cooperation are so beneficial, why haven't they emerged more fulsomely among other mammals? The answer is that such virtuous traits are hard. The presence of "bad actors"—those who cheat, back-stab and otherwise exploit kindness and cooperation—can prevent prosocial characteristics from flourishing unless a species has ways to weed out these troublemakers. And Cosmides says that the ability to identify dishonesty and selfishness requires "very sophisticated cognitive machinery" that humans have but other animals mostly lack. It's this machinery that has allowed the better angels of our nature to take wing. "If I'm going to cooperate with you, and especially if we're going to trade, I have to have representations of what you want and how much you want it," Cosmides explains. "I have to have some idea of why you want my apple more than you want your pear."

But this human capacity to see the world through another's eyes cuts both ways. While it allows people to spot cheaters and troublemakers, it also

allows those nefarious types to engage in duplicitous and deceptive behaviors. “If you can get away with cheating, that can be a good strategy as long as you’re not found out,” McAndrew says. And the same complicated cognitive machinery that helps good-natured people identify scoundrels also allows scoundrels to dupe the good-natured, he says.

This is where the kindness-bolstering role of reputation comes into play. All animals can communicate, but human communication is unusually complex and nuanced, and it allows us to pass on detailed information about another person’s behavior. Put another way, it allows us to gossip. “People have this knee-jerk reaction to gossip as something negative, but it exists for us to be able to assess the reputations of others,” McAndrew explains. “If you know people will talk about you when you’re not around, that forces you to stay in line.”

THE GREAT KINDNESS DEBATE

There’s not much expert disagreement when it comes to the evolutionary underpinnings of human altruism; as a species, humans are kind toward one another because it helps them work together, which in turn helps them succeed. But when it comes to the actions of individuals and the

Kindness is one of the keys to building social bonds.

personal motivations that promote kindness, the arguments heat up.

At the individual level, do we act altruistically to help others or to help ourselves? For many years, some prominent theories of human behavior held that an individual's benevolent tendencies are solely the byproduct of self-interested motivations. "Up until maybe 10 or 15 years ago, the dominant view of human nature from biological or economic ways of thinking was that individuals acted to maximize their own gains to the exclusion of everyone else," says Brent Simpson, a professor and chair of sociology at the University of South Carolina.

This view might argue that the act of donating time or money to the needy is in fact done for a reputational boost. Even the soldier who smothers the grenade could be said, in a roundabout way, to be acting on egotistical impulses—however ill-fated. "When it comes to males, heroism tremendously increases attractiveness to [romantic] mates," says McAndrew. The fact that courageous dudes get the girls may have favored the emergence of "hero genes" that encourage men to engage in dangerous acts of bravado in order to demonstrate their bravery to others, and therefore secure more mates. If that occasionally results in the death of the hero—frustrating the whole procreative purpose of the act—for the gender and the species at large, it's a net plus.

One view argues that the act of donating time or money to the needy is in fact done for a reputational boost.

This kind of "in it for myself" theorizing has been difficult to refute, Simpson says, because self-interested motives often lead to actions that, on the outside, seem genuinely benevolent. "Whether a person has more altruistic or more egoistic tendencies, their behaviors often look similar," he says. But some recent research repudiates the idea that all people are really selfish at heart. "There is increasingly clear evidence that humans on average are generous, kind and willing to forgo their own welfare for the well-being of others," he says.

For a 2007 study in the journal *Science*, researchers used brain-scan technology to measure how people reacted to different forms of giving. They found that when individuals were required to give money to a charity, some of the same pleasure-linked parts of the brain lit up as when people chose to give money voluntarily. "Even when people are forced to give to others, researchers find activity in reward centers of the brain," Simpson says. This suggests that, at some level, people feel good when they help

others—even if they didn't necessarily want to. "In countless small ways, we forgo benefits for ourselves even when we know we can get away with the selfish thing," he adds. "And given the context in which humans evolved, it would be surprising not to find these altruistic motivations."

Others agree. "For a long time, the Western view of human motivation was very Machiavellian—everything was a competition, and everyone was in it for themselves," says the Wright Institute's O'Connor. She says that Freud viewed the human unconscious as a cesspool of antisocial impulses. "But if this were really the way we're built, we wouldn't have survived as a species," she says. People aren't just kind superficially, or as a way to help themselves. "We're very social primates, and we're wired to take care of each other," she says.

O'Connor points out that the happiest nations tend to be the ones where equity is greatest, while nations with high levels of inequality tend to be less happy. "We're not comfortable when things are wildly unequal, even when we're the beneficiaries of the inequality." She also says that post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) frequently stems from situations in which individuals themselves may not be part of a group that has suffered a tragedy. "PTSD is often a reaction to witnessing serious harm coming to someone else, particularly someone you care about, rather than to oneself," she says.

Humans can strengthen their in-group affiliations by drawing dark contrasts between themselves and the allegedly menacing out-group.

In some cases, humans can even be altruistic to a fault. Some of O'Connor's work has examined empathic guilt—feeling bad because others are suffering—and the "pathological altruism" that this guilt can engender. "Battered women stay in relationships not because they feel dependent, but because they're worried something bad will happen to their boyfriend or husband if they leave," she says. "We're so prosocial that we feel responsible for the well-being of others, and this can be a problem when we sacrifice ourselves."

While most experts agree that kindness is a core ingredient in the human cocktail, there is a significant caveat, and it involves group membership and identification. While human beings have the capacity for almost bottomless generosity toward individuals with whom they share a sense of community or affiliation, people can engage in unspeakable and seemingly heartless acts of malice toward those who fall outside of their group. "Across cultures, it's often considered perfectly OK to kill a member of an out-group," says Cosmides. In some ways, the human capacity for kindness paradoxically creates the very capacity for cruelty; if you care enough about other people to make sacrifices for their well-being, it stands to reason that you would be willing to punish those who somehow threaten your community. And experts say this explains why out-group cruelty and even savagery are so prevalent.

These in-group versus out-group rules scale up and down, and in some ways are constantly shifting depending on context. Best friends who would normally extend each other almost any level of kindness may come to blows when their religious, political or even trivial sports affiliations clash. Much more disturbingly, human beings can strengthen their in-group affiliations and build up cooperative communities by drawing dark contrasts between themselves and the allegedly menacing members of an out-group. "It's common to depict outsiders as coalitions of evil that are trying to destroy you or invade you," says David Buss, a professor and evolutionary psychologist at the University of Texas at Austin. "Effective manipulators and politicians use this to try to exploit people."

Others say that, for good and bad, our brains and behaviors still function as though we lived in small groups of a few hundred people. "Societies didn't get significantly large until about 40,000 years ago," says Richard Wrangham, a professor of biological anthropology at Harvard. While we tend to act cooperatively when we're engaged with small groups, larger ones create space for crosscutting affiliations and the bad behavior they can stir up. "I think in modern society, it's easier to be a taker than a giver," says Knox College's McAndrew. He says the

Some people may be genetically wired to be kinder than others.

anonymity of contemporary human interaction—much of it online—contributes to this, and that there's no guarantee that human beings are moving toward greater levels of kindness or cooperation.

"I don't think there's any evolutionary pressure toward universal benevolence," agrees Harvard's Greene. "That doesn't mean it's not possible for us, but it would sort of be like climbing the evolutionary ladder and then kicking it away." While that may seem unlikely, he says that humans have already developed the capacity for this kind of counter-evolutionary behavior, and one example is our use of birth-control methods. "From the point of view of evolution and our genes, nothing could be worse than doing something that stops you from making more copies of your genes," he says. "But we use our big problem-solving brains in order to enjoy sex without making more children than we want."

"It may be possible," he adds, "to sort of outmoral evolution—to take the mechanisms that evolved within groups as a cooperation strategy and to apply them universally." Doing this would involve not so much overcoming our nature as augmenting it. Human beings are built at least in part for altruism and bridge-building; it's in our nature to be kind to one another and, to an extent, to make sacrifices for the good of our groups. The trick is to promote a sense of shared experience and fraternity among all humans—rather than breaking people down into groups of potential competitors.

"Culture and learning play a big role in these things," Greene says. "When people hear 'evolutionary psychology,' they think of these things as being determined by genes or something like that. But our genetics interact in complicated ways with our cultural and individual experiences." To illustrate this point, he explains that humans are clearly engineered for language. This ability is baked into our DNA. "But if a person was never exposed to a language, they wouldn't be able to speak it," he says.

In the same way, people may be built with genes that predispose them toward kindness and egalitarianism. But these traits need to be encouraged and reinforced through culture and learning—by emphasizing the things we share, by engaging with those people who seem as though they're outside of our groups, and by rewarding people who act kindly and cooperatively while withholding rewards from those who act selfishly or duplicitously.

"The way to be happy is to help others," says O'Connor. "We evolved to be a prosocial species, and we're happiest when we're being altruistic and helping one another." □

The Feral Child

Children are equal parts angels and demons—and that's how it should be

BY BONNIE ROCHMAN

Children begin to show empathy by kindergarten age.

Recently, I was flipping through the journals I had kept about my kids in their early years, before life took over and the meticulous chronicling of milestones and funny phrases went on hiatus. In writing about my oldest, who was 4 at the time, I noted how quick he was to grab his little sister's hand to help her cross the street safely but much slower to spring into action when she would take a tumble. He'd stand there watching her cry, unsure what to do. "It's hard for you to show empathy," I wrote.

Cringe. Was I raising a sociopath?

When it comes to traits that parents hope to imbue in their children, empathy ranks high. Fortunately, empathy—the ability to put ourselves in another person's shoes and understand their experiences and emotions—isn't a binary, all-or-nothing proposition. It's a gradual cultivation of kindness and concern for others that begins to bloom in babies and continues to unfold over many years.

It takes children a long time to develop basic empathy. You don't need to look beyond the playground to see that truth in action: toddlers don't fully recognize or care that something that hurts them physically or emotionally would hurt another person just as much—which is why they can hit playmates (or parents!) so indiscriminately or cut in line for the slide without an ounce of shame. But even as kids get older, they require hands-on guidance and plenty of role modeling to transform into caring creatures.

Truly understanding how one's behavior prompts emotions or reactions in others is a complex ability that requires fathoming others' perspectives while engaging in sophisticated information processing. It's a particularly challenging cerebral task for children, who aren't yet adept at mental juggling. "You have to keep track of what you're doing and other people's reactions to that, which requires bandwidth and working memory," says Celeste Kidd, an assistant professor of psychology at the University of California, Berkeley, who uses artificial-intelligence tools to help build theories about human behavior. "Kids have less attentional bandwidth than adults."

That's not to say they have none at all. It does appear that very young children come hardwired with some rudimentary antennae for empathic behavior. That's illustrated early on when babies imitate another's smile or stick out their tongues

to mirror a parent who is doing the same. Incredibly, babies even cry more in response to recordings of other babies' crying than to recordings of their own wails.

EMPATHY THROUGH THE AGES

In early 2020, the University of Washington's Institute for Learning & Brain Sciences (I-LABS) published a study about infant altruism and the evolution of helping behaviors. Could babies act kindly to adults when it cost the babies something, requiring them to subvert their own selfishness to show emotional generosity? Researchers tested this in 19-month-olds who like bananas, pairing them with adults who held a slice of banana and exclaimed how much they loved it too. The adult accidentally fumbled the banana so that it fell onto a tray out of reach of the adult but right in front of the baby.

"If this were a chimp, it would grab the banana and scamper away," says Andrew Meltzoff, a professor of psychology at the University of Washington, a co-director of I-LABS and a senior author of the study, published in *Scientific Reports*, a *Nature* open-access journal. "The baby picked up the banana, looked at it longingly, then handed it back to the adult. We call this 'costly helping,' doing something to help another even though you have to give up something valuable yourself."

Could babies act kindly toward adults when it cost the babies something, requiring them to subvert their own selfishness?

This costly helping is an early form of empathy, something Meltzoff thinks develops because a baby codes other people as being "like me." When a mother shakes a rattle and a baby shakes it back, this exchange is enjoyable because the like-me connection is engaged, posits Meltzoff's theory. The baby giggles and they forge a mutual connection. "This is the bedrock for development of empathy and kindness," says Meltzoff. "One reason we act empathetic to others is we know what it's like to be like them. Babies are studying us all the time. When babies see us acting kind, they register it. The little acts of kindness that they see and receive help fan the development of empathy, kindness and altruism toward others."

When adults are trying to teach children empathy, it's helpful to be mindful of their cognitive and developmental stage. Around kindergarten, children can start to intuit the feelings of another person, an ability that expands with experience, says Tara Cousineau, a staff psychologist at Harvard University's counseling and mental health services. But that heightened sensitivity can start unspooling in middle school, when displays of empathy may be thwarted as children strive to fit in with the tribe.

"It's a survival skill," says Cousineau, who notes that empathy can be dialed up or down depending on what a particular social situation or stage of life calls for. "We learn empathy through our interactions, which mature and develop over time. Empathy is not linear; it's relational. We can try to teach it, but honestly, we need to demonstrate it."

Things get worse in the teen years, when empathy really takes a beating. It's no secret that teens as a whole are seen as self-centered, concerned almost exclusively with their own needs. Kidd suggests it's helpful to think of teens' narcissistic tendencies as a function of capacity; they can keep track of only so many things at once. When they are newly attending to a lot of other people outside their home and self-organizing their social lives, teens may run out of "slots" for attending to their parents or siblings.

"It's not that they don't care," says Kidd. "Their slots are full." As teens experiment socially and practice modeling friends' intentions, goals and desires, they get better at computing others' reactions. As they experience characteristic teen dramas—typically involving interpersonal upheavals—make mistakes and get surprising reactions, they are continuously able to improve their model of the social world, which spurs them to be kinder to those around them. (As a mom of three teens, I find it a relief to know that there's a point to all the teen drama after all.)

WHY EMPATHY MATTERS

It might be useful to think of this process of cultivating and modeling empathy as Project Reform Your Feral Child, molding base instincts into pil-

lars of virtue. But showing empathy is not just about being kind to one another because it's a nice thing to do; empathy and kindness, though related, aren't synonymous.

"Empathy is understanding someone's feelings," says Kidd. "Kindness is the decision to optimize that and do something in the best emotional interest of someone else." This decision to choose kindness is connected to the success of our species in general. Humans are very different from other species in that we are more co-dependent on one another. We collaborate, which has led to technological innovations from airplanes to computers to modern medicine. "You can't collaborate with other people if you can't get along with them and empathize with them," says Kidd. "You can't coexist unless you can model others' beliefs, desires, hopes and dreams."

Empathy isn't just about feeling good or raising kind kids; showing empathy at a young age can be a marker for future success.

Religious and cultural foundations of society—houses of worship and social service organizations—often emphasize empathy, and praise and reward those who display it. That's because empathy is seen as a positive experience for both the giver and the receiver. "Being kind makes us happier," says Chris Willard, a child psychologist in Cambridge, Mass., and the author of *Raising Resilience*, in which he notes that research shows that both giving and receiving are associated with good moods. "Neuroscience says that if you act in kind ways, it impacts how much serotonin is released, which helps regulate anxiety. You also get some dopamine—which makes you want to repeat the behavior because it's rewarding—and oxytocin, which brings you closer to people."

But empathy isn't just about feeling good or raising kind kids; showing empathy at a young age can be a marker of future success. Kindergartners who exhibited prosocial skills such as sharing were more likely to graduate high school on time, finish college and land full-time jobs by their mid-20s than kids who weren't so keen on sharing, according to research published in 2015 in the *American Journal of Public Health*.

Life experiences can determine which kids display empathy at a young age and continue as they get older. More empathetic children are likely to have encountered a broad range of experiences and people, as reflected by the two core kinds of empathy. Cognitive empathy is associated with understanding another's perspective and experiences. Affective empathy runs deeper, referring to the ability to vicariously experience other people's feelings. Think of it like this: cognitive empathy is rationally identifying someone else's experience, and affective empathy is identifying with the emotional essence of that experience. Interacting with people from other races and cultures is one important variable that makes it easier to develop affective empathy. "The more we engage with people who might have different backgrounds, the more apt we are to see them as human and connect with them," says Chris Barry, a professor of psychology at Washington State University.

The good news is that empathy continues to develop and be refined over the course of a lifetime in response to situations and contexts. Consider how the Black Lives Matter movement has sparked a deeper understanding of the struggles that Black people face, even though the struggles themselves are hardly new. It's been nearly 30 years since Rodney King, a black construction worker, was brutally beaten by Los Angeles police, sparking days of riots. But more recent civil rights protests triggered by police killings of Black victims have helped drive home the injustices that Black people face every day. Lived experience is cumulative; it can take observers—white people, in this case—years to truly understand the magnitude of a situation.

ONE STEP FORWARD, TWO STEPS BACK

As with so many complex processes, not everything always proceeds as planned. Sometimes kids don't develop empathy to the degree that others do. The latest edition of the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual*, the handbook of psychological and psychiatric disorders, includes a category called "limited prosocial tendencies," what Barry describes as "a more PC way of referring to callousness and narcissism." This diagnosis is associated with more severe conduct problems that persist over time. People with

limited prosocial tendencies tend to lack remorse or guilt and an empathic understanding of how their behavior—such as bullying or aggression—affects others. "They don't identify the harm toward other people," says Barry. "And without empathy, they may focus on the rewarding aspects of their behavior, such as a boost in their self-esteem."

For the average child, counteracting a tendency toward uncaring behavior can be helped if parents actively emphasize acts of kindness. "You want to consistently send the message that the cost-benefit analysis of doing nice things is more favorable than doing not-nice things," says Barry, who is an associate editor of the *Journal of Child and Family Studies*.

One way of achieving that goal is by modeling empathy ourselves. America's toxic political environment may make it feel as if we're living in an empathic black hole these days, but that's exactly why it's so important to double down on this virtue. "I can't remember a time when people were so divided and so unkind," says Mark Barnett, a professor of psychology at Kansas State University. "The focus on kindness couldn't be more relevant."

Being able to interpret and label emotions is key to cultivating empathy. "Feelings are mentionable and manageable so talk about emotions such as anger or sadness to help kids name what they're feeling," says Cousineau.

For young children, story time is a perfect opportunity to teach empathy. Reading books is critical for language development and reading skills, of course, but it's also an important way to learn about feelings. When reading books aloud, focus on characters' emotions. Picked a book about a bully? Ask your child to consider how she'd feel if someone did something mean to her. Prompt your child to examine what's underpinning a character's behavior. Why is this child crying? Why is that child smiling? "It's important to teach kids to vicariously experience the emotions of others," says Barnett.

Choose books, television shows and movies with diverse characters whose gender, skin color and background are different from your child's experiences. "There is some evidence that there may be an evolutionary basis for division among individuals based on a built-in tendency to relate more favorably to those who are similar to us," says Barnett. "Pushing back against this can be an uphill battle, but it needs to start early, from birth onward."

Within your family, create a culture of giving,

Teens use empathy to evaluate the changing world around them.

inviting children to contribute money to a "giving" jar and involving them in choosing a charity. I was thrilled when my youngest daughter recently celebrated her bat mitzvah and received a similar gift from two families: one gave her a check and sent the same amount to a charity of her choosing; the other gave her a check and included a second check with a blank recipient line and stamped envelope for her to donate to her favorite charity, putting the responsibility of deciding to whom to be kind and generous directly in her hands.

For teens, whose raison d'être is predicated on showing little regard for others outside their

friendship group, it can be helpful to subtly support building relationships with peers who show sensitivity and compassion; if your teen's friend starts an online fundraiser for a worthy cause, for example, be sure your own teen sees you make a donation. Take your teens with you to volunteer at a food bank and make the activity more palatable by allowing them to bring a friend. "Don't stop modeling and encouraging empathy," says Barnett. "All that effort early on to teach concern for others was not for naught. Even if they go through a hardened, narcissistic phase, the love and learning from earlier years will eventually shine through." In other words, teens haven't lost the capacity to empathize with others—even though it may seem so.

"Evolutionarily, behaving in kind ways pays off," says Willard. "Making friends and allies, not enemies, sets you up for success." If for no reason other than that, I'm happy to report that my son—the one who awkwardly stood by years ago when his little sis kissed the pavement—had made considerable strides on the empathy yardstick by the time he turned 8. He had not one but two sisters by this time, and I'd journaled that he had acted "genuinely interested when your baby sister tells you things instead of ignoring her as you might have in the past. You are gaining in empathy!"

In our culture, we call that a mensch, and nearly a decade later, that is exactly what he has grown up to be. ◻

Imagine that you've volunteered for a scientific study. The purpose of the research is to measure the effect of punishment on learning and memory. Your role, an investigator tells you, will be to administer increasingly powerful electric shocks to another volunteer each time he or she gives an incorrect answer to a series of word-pair questions. You watch as your fellow volunteer is strapped into an electroshock chair. You're guided to another room where you can hear—but not see—the person in the chair.

The researcher departs, and the experiment begins. You read out questions and administer mild shocks. After a while, your counterpart's incorrect answers start to accumulate. The shocks grow stronger, and the person begins protesting and even crying out in pain. Using an intercom, you voice your discomfort to the researcher, but you're told to continue. Even when the other volunteer starts banging on the wall in agony and later grows silent, the researcher tells you that you have no choice. You must go on. Would you?

This experiment actually took place at Yale University during the 1960s. Volunteers administered what they believed were real electric shocks to people they thought were their co-volunteers, but who were actually actors hired as part of the study. No one was actually shocked. The true purpose of the experiment was to assess whether people would continue to administer painful electrical jolts—even ones powerful enough to ostensibly kill another person—if they were ordered to do so.

Before the study, its leader, a psychologist named Stanley Milgram, polled Yale students and colleagues to ask if they believed that anyone would administer the highest-voltage shock—the one that seemed strong enough to kill. All those polled believed that either zero or very, very few—maybe one or two people—would administer the maximum voltage. They were wrong. Milgram's experiments found that around 65% of the study participants, whether male or female, delivered the most powerful shock. They did so after considerable protest, and many were trembling, wailing or suffering from hysteria by the study's end, tormented by what they'd done. But a majority followed orders and did it anyway. Later researchers repeated variations of Milgram's experiment; the results didn't much change.

Evolutionary scientists broadly agree that a unique and highly developed capacity for group

When It All Goes Awry

We're hardwired for kindness, but what happens when those wires rip?

BY MARKHAM HEID

Runner Bill Iffrig was knocked down during the 2013 Boston Marathon bombing.

cooperation has powered human progress. This capacity is built in part on a foundation of kindness and altruism. People tend to take care of one another, share with one another and in some cases are willing to risk their lives or livelihoods for one another—even beyond the bounds of close friend and family relationships.

And yet. Milgram's work helps illustrate the duality of the human condition. The people in his study were intensely distraught by the experience of administering such punishment to other people. But when a trustworthy authority figure gave an order, most obeyed. The findings revealed that many people—maybe most—are capable of cruelty if the circumstances are right.

Of course, lab experiments aren't needed to make this point. Human history could be—and often is—viewed as a long and largely uninterrupted string of wars and conflicts. Examples of genocide and atrocity abound. How is it possible that the human brain—an organism equipped with the faculties for so much goodness and generosity—can also orchestrate acts of brutality, duplicity and sadism? Ironically, the answer may be that the good in people may actually make space for the bad.

Neuroscientists and others who study the brain and behavior have begun to uncover the roots of humankind's seemingly inhuman inclinations for situational cruelty and barbarism. And though it may be unsettling, their findings suggest that—if the circumstances are right—the potential for malice may exist in every one of us.

WHEN PEOPLE BREAK BAD

There are many ways to categorize and collate acts of violence. Most experts who study human behavior place murder in a category of its own, and most agree that there are some predictable scenarios in which murderous acts are more likely to take place.

"Male-on-male intersexual competition is one," says David Buss, a professor and evolutionary psychologist at the University of Texas at Austin. Relatively speaking, males are likely to savage each other in order to secure a female sexual partner because, historically, success in this arena allowed them to pass on their genes to offspring. "Coalitional warfare is another one that almost everyone agrees on," Buss says. He explains that human beings are a "supremely cooperative species" and that our deeply ingrained propensity toward group collaboration and success enables our brains to justify the suppression or killing of competing groups.

Unfortunately, the element of humans' evolved psychology that is oriented toward group-on-group competition can be seized upon by those who hope to benefit from another group's downfall. "These adaptations can be exploited by others for their own ends," Buss says. For example, the leader of an army or nation may demonize members of a competing group to incite members of its own side toward violence.

Wartime propaganda is a rich field of academic scholarship, and psychologists today are still deriving insights from the images of some WWII-era iconography. In Nazi Germany, flyers and partisan newspaper cartoons often depicted Jews as rats and labeled them as "vermin" to be exterminated. In the U.S. at that time, posters and pamphlets characterized the Japanese as ape-like savages. Researchers today have found that this imagery and messaging, by dehumanizing a perceived enemy, may alter brain activity in ways that help people justify acts of cruelty.

One of the tools that allow human beings to engage cooperatively is the ability to see the world from another's perspective.

One of the essential cognitive tools that allow human beings to engage in cooperative action is the ability to see and experience the world from another person's perspective. Animals may display less-complex forms of this ability. But in people it's highly developed, and it's necessary for identifying another's motivations and good intentions. "In order to interact with other people—in order to understand why they do things or predict what they might do—it's really important that we think about what's going on inside their minds," says Lasana Harris, an associate professor of social cognition at University College London. Recognizing another's "internal life" is also important for creating the interpersonal connections and shared

The psychologist Stanley Milgram, above, conducted a study in which subjects were given an opportunity to inflict what they believed were painful shocks on other subjects. It revealed stark truths about human nature.

humanness that undergird moral behavior, he says.

In normal interactions with other people, the brain spontaneously does this kind of mind interpreting. But Harris's work has found that the brain behaves differently when others are dehumanized; the process of trying to see another person's view of life is in some ways stunted, and alternate brain networks—including some linked to disgust—switch on. Harris says that these shifts may help people forgive themselves for acting cruelly toward dehumanized others. "After violence has occurred, this may be useful for rationalizing that violent behavior," he says. "That person is not quite human, so the violence I wreaked upon them isn't that bad."

While dehumanizing others may help the brain justify inhumane behavior—or even fuel cruelty as it's happening—Harris says that the bedrock motivations for most acts of violence are revenge, fear and the perception of a threat. Interactions with members of an out-group—that is, a group of people regarded as somehow separate or at odds with one's own—is one reliable way to promote these emotions. Once the brain perceives another as belonging to an out-group, the potential for all manner of savagery is brought into play. "Members of out-groups represent threats and danger, and so the spontaneous tendency is to be hostile toward members of other groups," says Richard Wrangham, a professor of biological anthropology at Harvard University.

Wrangham says that for much of human history, people lived in relatively small societies (a few hundred people) that were fearful of neighboring groups. "If one of these hunter-gatherers met a member of another group—someone who wears clothes in a slightly different way, or whose language was slightly different, or whose bow was designed

Denver Broncos and Dallas Cowboys fans broke out into a heated fight during the fourth quarter of a football game in 2017.

differently—the response was automatically hostile," he explains. The life-or-death stakes of this intergroup competition activated neurocognitive circuitry that allowed for aggression and savagery toward out-group members, and this circuitry is still hardwired into every human brain today.

While war predictably draws out this capacity for out-group violence, Wrangham says that almost any group-competition scenario can allow a measure of these brutal characteristics to seize hold of our behavior. "Once you've established these group identities, it's very easy to elicit the in-group–out-group psychology we've always lived with," he says. For example, people with competing political affiliations—or even fans of rival sports teams—often display true contempt or hatred toward one another. Were a measure of order or restraint not imposed by society, Wrangham says that this sort of intergroup conflict could frequently lead to intergroup violence. And even with those societal guardrails in place, it still does—think of soccer brawls in the stands of stadiums.

Power differentials among groups also play an important role when it comes to encouraging or suppressing acts of cruelty. Wrangham says that human beings have a strong tendency toward proactive—as

opposed to reactive—aggression. "Reactive aggression is the testosterone-fueled kind where you lose your temper and lash out at an opponent because you're so aroused," he says. While it may seem like this kind of emotion-triggered aggression is commonplace, Wrangham says that, compared with other primates like chimpanzees, human beings have these sorts of clashes at around 1/1,000 the frequency that apes do.

On the other hand, he says that human beings frequently engage in proactive aggression,

People with competing political affiliations—or even fans of rival sports teams—often display true hatred or contempt toward one another; think of soccer brawls in the stands of stadiums.

which is calculated, cold-blooded and usually "asymmetrical"—meaning one side has the overwhelming advantage at the time it attacks. "People are designed to be unaggressive if they foresee a serious chance of personal danger," Wrangham says. But put people in situations where they can harm a competitor without significant risk to themselves, and human kindness and fellow feeling often yield to cutthroat and selfish impulses. Given the opportunity to badmouth or impugn an adversary—whether it's a colleague competing for a promotion or a friend wooing the same romantic partner—most people will take it unless there's a threat of punishment or reprisal. Wrangham also points out that many modern conflicts—the U.S.'s involvements in Vietnam, Iraq and Afghanistan, as well as the Hutu-led massacre of Tutsis in Rwanda—have pitted a powerful aggressor against a seemingly vastly outmatched opponent.

"We know that these different forms of aggression are governed by different neurological mechanisms," Wrangham says. "Different tracts in the brain are activated." One 2019 study in the journal *Scientific Reports* found that, in both men and women, proactive aggression fires up areas of the brain related to calculation, rationalizing and moral disinhibition. Moreover, a 2008 study in *PLOS One* found that the brain activity associated with hatred does not resemble the activity associated with fear, anger or other hot-blooded emotions. In the context of hate, the authors of that study write, "the hater may want to exercise judgment in calculating moves to harm, injure or otherwise extract revenge." Hatred, in these cases, is a colder emotion.

Of course, there are also individuals in whom the brain's normal kindness-promoting mechanisms are somehow compromised—by injury, for example, or due to mental illness or disorder. "There are sociopaths or psychopaths who don't seem to care about anybody at all, but those people are rare," says Joshua Greene, a professor of psychology at Harvard University and the author of *Moral Tribes: Emotion, Reason, and the Gap Between Us and Them*. While these types, by definition, have pathological minds, Greene says that evolutionary mechanisms may explain why they show up consistently in large groups. "If everyone else is playing the cooperative game"—that is, treating one another kindly and morally—"some can defect from the norm and reap benefits in what is mostly a nonviolent society," he says. In other words, some amoral or cruel people may do well in society, and so natural selection hasn't fully culled them from our midst.

CALLING FORTH OUR BETTER ANGELS

In his best seller *The Better Angels of Our Nature*, the Harvard psychologist Steven Pinker puts forward a compelling case that humankind has clearly grown less violent, less prejudiced and more amiable over time, as the rank barbarism of the ancients has become something we look back on with a sort of collective shame. While violence and discrimination are still common, Pinker argues that humans, collectively, have gradually turned down the volume on our species' baser instincts.

Even so, we have plenty of work left to do. But the cooperative tendencies that have allowed humankind to thrive do seem to be on the ascent. The more we each strive to find commonality and to see one another as members of the same team—call it Team Human—the more we can snuff out those circumstances that engage the brain's faculties for cruelty and violence. ◻

Kindness *in* Critters

It's not just humans who have the capacity to be kind. Indeed, there's a lot that animals can teach us

BY COURTNEY MIFSUD

Dolphins will aid other dolphins, as well as members of other species. In 2002, for example, a fisherman off the coast of Queensland, Australia, had been clinging to his upturned dinghy for 40 hours and was being circled by sharks. Then a pod of dolphins arrived and chased them off.

A 12-year-old girl in Ethiopia made headlines some years ago when she was reportedly protected by lions. A group of seven men had abducted the girl with the intention of forcing her into marriage, police sergeant Wondimu Wedajo, who helped find the child, told the Associated Press in the wake of the abduction. When the police discovered the girl after a weeklong search, she was being guarded by a pride of lions. "They stood guard [for half a day] until [police and family] found her, and then they just left her like a gift," said Wedajo of the 2005 case. "If the lions had not come to her rescue, then it could have been much worse."

The girl told the police she had been beaten by her abductors, but no harm was done to her by the lions. And although some animal experts doubted the pride's intentions, others theorized that something about how young and afraid this girl was struck a chord with lions. "A young girl whimpering could be mistaken for the mewing sound from a lion cub, which in turn could explain why they didn't eat her," Stuart Williams, a wildlife expert with the rural development ministry, said at the time.

The animal kingdom is a dangerous place. Food can be scarce—and access to it may include life-or-death fights. And humans, of course, can bring devastation. But despite all the peril, competition and combat that are commonplace in the wild, it is becoming more and more apparent that kindness and empathy not only thrive in animals but can also be crucial to survival.

In order to document and study kindness and empathy in animals, ecologist and author Carl Safina has laid out a few approaches. "We have at least three very good ways of getting inside the mind of nonhuman animals," he says. "We can look at the brain and how it's put together. We can consider the unifying principle of all of biology, which is evolution. We also can simply watch what animals do and see if it makes sense in a way that makes sense to us."

Those three approaches lead to three more guidelines, differentiated by three forms of kindness: empathy, sympathy and compassion. "Empathy is the ability of a mind to match the mood of another mind," Safina says. Sympathy is a step removed from empathy. If somebody enters a room and is visibly upset because a grandparent has died, you may not necessarily feel the person's pain, but you may nonetheless be motivated to relieve it. "Dogs are very good at showing sympathy. If

people are upset or they're crying, [dogs] come over and try to offer some sort of comfort," says Safina. "They can't do that much, but neither can we do that much. Usually if we see somebody upset, we go and give them a hug. That's about all we do." Compassion is a variation of sympathy, one that includes more rationally considered feelings of concern, understanding or even pity.

When we think of kindness, rodents might be far from our minds, but a team of neurobiologists discovered that rats can teach us a lot about empathy. Led by Peggy Mason of the University of Chicago, the researchers constructed a model that showcased the empathetic prosocial behavior of lab rats. Published in 2011 in the journal *Science*, the group's study involved moving two rats that were living together in the same cage into a special arena. One rat was placed into a tube-shaped restraining container while the other rat was allowed to roam freely. Only a nudge from the outside, by the free rat, would allow the container to open. The free rat was visibly distraught while its cage mate was trapped, and after a couple of failed attempts, it figured out how to spring open the trap. Once the freed rat learned this trick, it immediately freed its comrade in subsequent sessions.

These results didn't surprise Mason, who had seen empathic behavior in rats before. What did surprise her was the result when her research team introduced chocolate into the equation. From Mason's years of research, she knew that rats were big fans of chocolate chips, and her team leveraged this treat to create an ethical dilemma for the rodents. They constructed a second container, one with a chocolate chip, which also opened with a nudge. If so inclined, the free rat could first open the tube containing the chocolate, having the treat all to itself, and then release the trapped rat. Or the rat could first free its cage mate, which would mean the free rat would be forced to share its snack. In a surprise to Mason, the rats opened the containers in no particular order, a finding that told researchers that the rats valued each other at least on par with chocolate. What's more, even when the rats opened the chocolate container first, says Mason, "they only ate just a little over a half. So they left chocolate for the other rat. That is the most surprising thing that I've ever seen."

In 2016 Mason published another study, in which the anti-anxiety medication midazolam was involved. Mason discovered that when the free rats were medicated, they were less likely to free their fellow rats from the trap, strongly suggesting that the unmedicated rats that freed the trapped ones were motivated by an emotion of some kind—stress, sadness or empathic pain. "I think it's a product of evolution, which has basically yoked the potential helper's emotional state to do that," she explains.

More recently, Mason's team has studied the bystander effect in rats. As in the earlier studies, a rat was locked into a container that could be easily opened by a free rat. But in this study, the free rat

Dogs have been known to display empathy, compassion and kindness.

was joined by one or two confederate rats, both of which were rendered incompetent to help through the same anti-anxiety medication. The researchers found that in the presence of treated confederate rats, the untreated free rat did not regularly help. It's unclear why the untreated rat simply stood by, but its behavior could mirror that of humans who will often wait for someone else in a group to render aid before acting themselves. If no one moves first, sometimes no one moves at all.

While observing animals to understand empathy is a crucial step, researchers learn even more when brain chemistry enters the equation. In 2016, a team of researchers at Emory University led by Larry Young, a professor of psychiatry, studied prairie voles, a mammal that mates for life and is especially good at exhibiting empathy. When one vole is administered a small electrical charge, for example, a mate vole will respond by licking and grooming it, seemingly offering consolation. Young believes that this consolation response is linked to the monogamous family bonds the voles share.

"Since they have the same partner for a long period of time, and we know that the stress in a mother can have detrimental effects on babies," explains Young, "we thought that males would have evolved this behavior, [because] if they see their partner being stressed, it would mean that their babies are being bathed in stress hormones, and they should have evolved the ability to detect that."

The chemistry that drives consoling behavior involves the hormone oxytocin. “Oxytocin is what causes the mother to give birth and also to eject the milk so that she can nurse her babies,” says Young. “And it causes her to want to lick and groom and nurture those babies.”

He and his team demonstrated this link by blocking the oxytocin receptors in the voles, and in those cases the voles did not show the grooming or consoling behavior toward other adult voles and babies. Not all species of vole react to the absence or presence of oxytocin in the same way. Young’s team also researched meadow voles, which do not mate monogamously or live in the same type of social groups, and found that, unlike in prairie voles, this consoling response was not deployed beyond the mother-child bond.

Why have some species evolved to deploy unique empathetic responses while others have not? Safina argues that the response is an evolutionary advantage for species that function as a social group. Without the ability to mood match,

In rare cases, predators like lions have protected other animals' offspring, perhaps by perceiving a similarity to their own young.

a defining element for empathy, a group will never understand what is going on among its members. He says that the oldest and most widespread form of empathic mood matching is contagious fear.

"Something happens that makes somebody perk up a little and grow uneasy. You will immediately detect that; otherwise, the social structure falls apart and any chance at group escape or group defense would fall apart," says Safina.

If there's indeed an evolutionary advantage of empathy in preserving a social group, what about instances of animals extending that response beyond what might logically make sense, such as the lions seemingly protecting that young girl in Ethiopia? Her cub-like whimpering might indeed have explained the lions' actions, but other things might too. According to Safina, there are similar examples of animals that in some instances have notably avoided harming—or have even attempted to care for—an individual of a different species that it otherwise might be motivated to harm.

"You see that kind of thing most often with predatory animals that decide not to kill or eat a baby," explains Safina. "The babyness of it is something they perceive, and it disarms their desire to kill it in the moment."

Still, for all animals, empathy is most common toward members of their own pack, herd, pride or, in the case of humans, family and tribe. "We care most about those who are in our group. We care little about those who are not in our group," says Safina. "And a lot of that is completely arbitrary. You may be a foreigner in a place that we're at war with, and I'd be engaged to kill you, but if you happen to immigrate into my country, you're my countryman."

In nonhuman animals, that in-group paradigm similarly plays out in seemingly arbitrary ways. Chimpanzees will defend their territory against a group of nearly identical chimpanzees and essentially go to war. They patrol their territory borders in a way similar to our own. Then they will return home and show nothing but caring for their own troopmates.

For all species, the fact that empathy exists is a good thing. For all species too, expressing that emotion even more generously is a better thing still. Humans, the wisest of all species, are the ones most capable of understanding that simple truth—and acting on it.

"Every time we advance the circle outward, we make life better," says Safina. "And that geometry applies not just to the family of our species but to the entire living family. The more we include them in our consideration of compassion and our capacity for empathy, the better it is. First of all, they don't suffer because of us. And secondly, it makes the world a much more beautiful place to be in for us." □

2

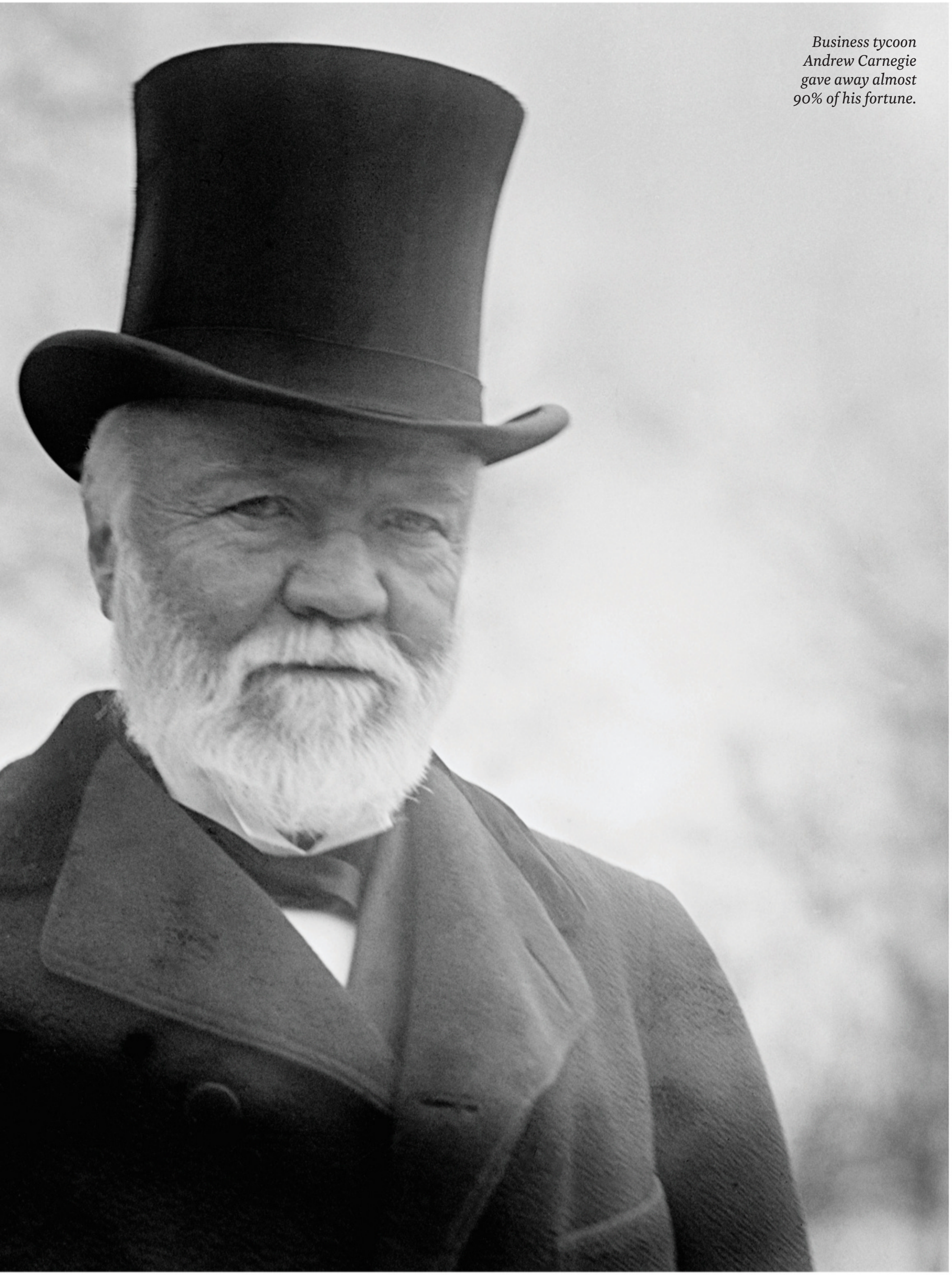
The Culture *of* Kindness

The Great Philanthropists

With enormous wealth comes enormous power. A handful of people have used that fact to move the world

BY EMILY JOSHU

Derived from the Greek word *philanthropia*, philanthropy represents "love of mankind," an impulse as old as time, practiced by celebrated public figures and everyday citizens. It strives to impart kindness individually and globally, often in areas such as public health, education, scientific research and human rights. Philanthropy's history is extensive, but in modern times, it has been most famously represented by noteworthy figures who built their wealth through different paths and then used it for the common good. From tech giants to investing gurus to equality activists, here are some of the most prominent philanthropists in modern history.



Business tycoon Andrew Carnegie gave away almost 90% of his fortune.

GEORGE PEABODY

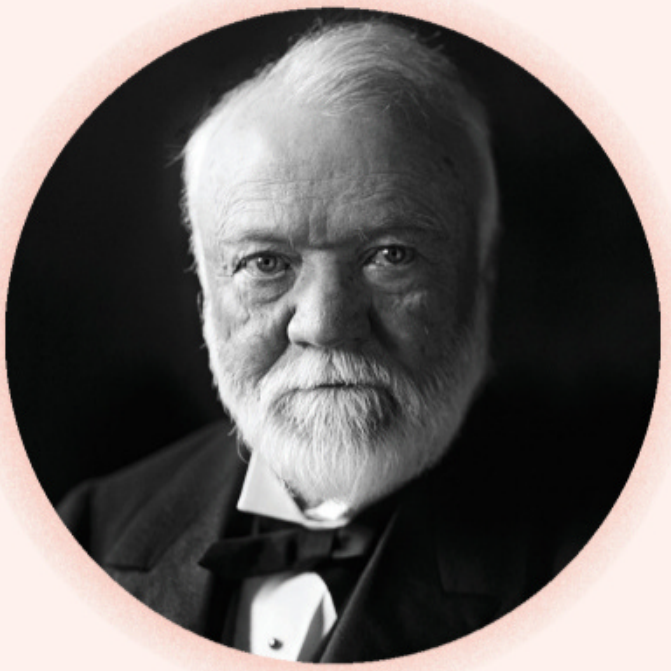
Born in Danvers, Mass., in 1795, George Peabody made his fortune as a merchant and financier. The third of eight children in a working-class family, he received only four years of formal education and began his merchant career as a general-store apprentice at age 11. After moving to Washington, D.C., 19-year-old Peabody met Elisha Riggs Sr., who offered to make him a partner at his business, importing wholesale dry goods. In 1835, Peabody founded George Peabody & Co., a merchant bank in London offering securities in American businesses. He shifted his focus toward philanthropy in 1852 by funding the Peabody Institute Library in his hometown of Danvers. In the following years, he founded the Peabody Institute of Baltimore, as well as additional libraries across the U.S.; a museum of archaeology at Harvard; and a museum of natural history at Yale. He announced his intention to create a trust in 1862 to "ameliorate the condition of the poor and needy . . . and to promote their comfort and happiness," he wrote. He made good on that pledge partly by providing housing to laboring poor. Through such work, he became known as the father of modern philanthropy. In 1867, Peabody was awarded the Congressional Gold Medal. Additionally, Queen Victoria sent thanks and offered him baronetcy or knighthood. It is estimated that Peabody gave away half of his fortune during his lifetime.

MADAM C.J. WALKER

Before becoming the first female self-made millionaire in the U.S. and the era's wealthiest African-American businesswoman, Madam C.J. Walker was born Sarah Breedlove in 1867. She came into the world on the same Louisiana plantation where her parents had been enslaved and was orphaned at age 7. After seeking treatments for a scalp condition that caused her to lose her hair, Breedlove founded a business, Madam Walker's Wonderful Hair Grower, and changed her name to Madam C.J. Walker. To give back, she focused her efforts on institutes that would benefit the Black community. By early 1910, less than a year after settling in Indianapolis, she contributed $1,000 to the building of the city's "colored" YMCA, which marked the beginning of her philanthropic endeavors. She also took special interest in the social and political life of Harlem after settling there, contributing $5,000 to the NAACP's anti-lynching movement. She founded a network of beauty schools that could provide a career path for Black women. At the time of her death, the estimated value of her estate was $600,000 (nearly $9 million in today's dollars), and she left the majority of it to charity. "I am in the business world, not for myself alone," she told Booker T. Washington in 1912, "but to do all the good I can for the uplift of my race."

BILL AND MELINDA GATES

Twenty-five years after the creation of his global software empire Microsoft, co-founder Bill Gates and his wife, Melinda, shifted their focus to a different kind of innovation: giving back to the global community. They founded the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation in 2000 with the "aim to inspire and enable more informed and intentional generosity by all," according to the organization's website. The foundation works with worldwide partners who focus on areas such as global health, education and poverty. For example, the Gateses have pledged about $2 billion solely to help defeat malaria, aiming to eliminate the disease within a generation. In addition to creating Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance, alongside the World Health Organization and Unicef in order to supply lifesaving vaccines to developing nations, the Gateses are focusing on finding long-term treatments for HIV. Since its inception, the foundation has spent more than $53.8 billion, with 45% allocated to global development, 29% to global health, 16% to U.S. programs and 10% to other charitable programs. In 2018, Bill and Melinda Gates were named the most generous philanthropists in the U.S. by the *Chronicle of Philanthropy*. "Our role as philanthropists is not only to take risks that support innovation but to work with our partners to overcome the challenges of scale in delivering it," the Gateses wrote in their 2020 annual letter.



ANDREW CARNEGIE

Scottish immigrant Andrew Carnegie devoted his career to the expansion of the American steel industry, as well as to giving back to others. Emigrating from Scotland to the U.S. at age 12, he worked to invest in railroads, bridges and oil derricks. His fortune was primarily derived from controlling the most extensive integrated iron and steel operations owned by an individual in U.S. history. In 1901, at age 65, he sold the company to J.P. Morgan for $480 million. Though he had amassed a large fortune, Carnegie's 1889 article "The Gospel of Wealth" called on the rich to use their fortunes to improve society and combat the wealth-inequality gap. In the process, he became what some called a "radical" philanthropist. He played an important role in the establishment of free public libraries to make education accessible to everyone. He and the Carnegie Corporation spent more than $56 million to build over 2,500 libraries throughout the English-speaking world. Buildings and foundations in his name include Carnegie Hall in New York City, the Carnegie Institution for Science in Washington, D.C., and Carnegie Mellon University in Pittsburgh. During the last 18 years of his life, he gave away about $350 million (approximately $5 billion in today's dollars) to charities, foundations and educational institutions—almost 90% of his accumulated fortune.

ENRIQUETA AUGUSTINA RYLANDS

Though Enriqueta Augustina Rylands is best known as a philanthropist in Manchester, England, her legacy began in Cuba. Born Enriquita Augustina in Havana in 1843, she was one of five children of an English merchant based in that country. She relocated to Manchester following her father's death and became friends with Martha Rylands, the wife of merchant John Rylands. Eight months after Martha's death, Enriquita married John, who had amassed a fortune of more than £2.5 million. Following her husband's death, Rylands used her inheritance to establish the John Rylands Library in his memory, which opened in 1900, after a decade of labor. The citizens of Manchester thanked her for the gift by awarding her the keys to the city, which made her the first woman to receive that honor. In 1901, Rylands paid for more than 6,000 manuscripts to be stored in the library, one of the most impressive private collections in Britain at that time. Known for being secretive about her generosity, the modest Rylands also gave to Manchester charities and to the Wood Street Mission, which provided assistance and necessities, including clothing, toys and books, to low-income families. Additionally, she would disguise herself and travel to Dorset, where she anonymously provided similar assistance to the poor ministers living in the city.

WARREN BUFFETT

Chairman and CEO of Berkshire Hathaway, Warren Buffett is considered one of the most prominent and successful investors in the world. After watching and listening to investors at his father's small brokerage firm, he purchased his first stock at 11 years old. Buffett's net worth totaled nearly $90 billion as of December 2019, and the vast majority has been earmarked for philanthropic causes. In 2006, Buffett pledged to devote more than 99% of his wealth to philanthropy during his lifetime and to be completed 10 years after his estate is settled. He has already allocated nearly $37 billion to the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation. "Measured in dollars, this commitment is large. In comparative sense, though, many individuals give more to others every day," Buffett wrote in his pledge letter. In 2007, Buffett was listed among TIME's 100 Most Influential People in the world, and he was awarded the Presidential Medal of Freedom in 2011. He continues to support his family's individual foundations, such as his late wife's Susan Thompson Buffett Foundation and his sister Doris Buffett's Letters Foundation and Learning by Giving Foundation. Buffett's children will not inherit a significant portion of his wealth. He told *Fortune* magazine that the perfect amount to leave to kids is "enough money so that they would feel they could do anything, but not so much that they could do nothing."

JOHN D. ROCKEFELLER

Born in upstate New York in 1839, John D. Rockefeller was serious and driven from a young age, following the example of his stern Baptist mother. After taking a 10-week course on bookkeeping, he got his first office job at age 16. Though he made only 50 cents per day, he gave 6% to charity. Rockefeller later opened a brokerage firm that traded produce and petroleum products, and he and his partners opened an oil refinery shortly after. In 1870, the partnership was transformed into the corporation Standard Oil, which expanded to control 90% of the U.S. oil industry within 10 years. Rockefeller's net worth grew to about 1.5% of the country's total annual economic output, about $280 billion in today's dollars. As his business flourished, he received thousands of letters each month asking for help, but he later noted that the majority were "requests of money for personal use, with no other title to consideration than the writer would have been gratified to have it." Instead, he established a philanthropy, becoming the single most generous donor to the Northern Baptist Conventions, and he took an interest in providing higher education to African Americans. He also championed the development of biomedical research and the promotion of education for all. His most noteworthy project was helping to establish the University of Chicago, to which he gave a total of $35 million.

OPRAH WINFREY

Media pioneer and producer Oprah Winfrey was born in 1954 to a single teenage mother in rural Mississippi and spent much of her childhood living in poverty and moving between different cities and family members. At age 17, she attracted the attention of Nashville's radio station WVOL, where she worked for three years. After becoming a TV anchor at stations in Nashville, Baltimore and Chicago, Winfrey eventually received her own hour-long program, *The Oprah Winfrey Show*. She later secured her own television channel and print and online magazine. In 2010, *Forbes* ranked her as the richest Black American of the 20th century. As of 2020, she has a net worth of $2.6 billion. Much of her attention, however, has been focused on philanthropy. In 1998, she created Oprah's Angel Network, which helps other charitable projects and provides grants to nonprofit organizations globally. In 2004, Winfrey became the first African American to rank in the top 50 most generous Americans, and by 2012 she had donated about $400 million to educational causes. Other causes include supplying scholarships to historically Black Morehouse College in Atlanta and donating $12 million to the Smithsonian National Museum of African American History and Culture. She also founded the Oprah Winfrey Leadership Academy for Girls in South Africa. In 2013, President Barack Obama awarded her the Presidential Medal of Freedom for her generosity. ☐

there's not a lot to do in Syracuse, N.Y., when you're living alone and a winter storm system dumps three feet of snow on the city. There's no going outside, but there's no staying inside—at least not for too long—if you want to remain sane. A dinner with friends would be nice; so would a yoga class or a shared movie and a good long talk with a kind and sensitive friend. And when that's all done, it would also be nice to have just a little bit of that wintertime solitude, watching the snow fall, all alone, from the privacy of your own home.

At one place in Syracuse, all of that happens on those long snow-filled nights. That place is Commonspace, a "co-housing" community in a restored 19th-century office building. The community is made up of 112 mini-apartments, fully equipped with their own kitchenettes and baths, with access to a larger, shared chef's kitchen, library nook, game room, coffee lounge and media room. More than 80 residents (couples are welcome) live together—but only sort of—in private apartments that are, once you step outside your door, un-private too. And they're part of a growing trend in an increasingly lonely country: intentional communities.

In cities and towns across the U.S., individuals and families are coming to the conclusion that while the commune experiment of the 1960s was overwhelmed by problems, the idea of living in close—but not too close—cooperation with other people has a lot of appeal. An intentional community is a very different beast from the more familiar planned communities, which can be big, unwieldy things—hundreds or thousands of families living on small parcels across hundreds of acres of land. While there may be some common facilities—a swimming pool or golf course or community lake—the communities are really just villages writ large or cities writ small, easy places to be anonymous.

Intentional communities, by contrast, are intimate: a couple dozen apartments or single-family homes, built around central squares or common spaces. And they're operated in ways intended to keep the community connected—with weekly dinners at a community center or other common area, shared babysitting services, shared gardens or games or even vacations. If you don't want to participate, fine; no one will come pester you to play a pickup game you don't want to play or join a committee you don't want to join. But when you need the community—because a spouse is away or a baby is sick or

The Collective Home

Loneliness is an epidemic in the United States—and intentional communities could be the cure

BY JEFFREY KLUGER

Community-supported agriculture is one way to foster group mealtimes.

you're just plain lonely and would like some kindness and companionship—it's there for you.

It's that business of relieving loneliness that's key to the popularity of intentional communities. Human beings may not always get along, but the fact is, we can't get enough of one another. There are currently 7.8 billion of us in the world, but we inhabit only about 10% of the planet's land, and roughly 50% of us live on just 1% of that land.

"We evolved to depend on our social connections," says Vivek Murthy, a former U.S. surgeon general. "Over thousands of years, this got baked into our nervous systems—so much so that if we are feeling socially disconnected, that places us in a physiologic stress state."

According to a study by AARP, more than one third of American adults suffer from loneliness, a condition that, Murthy warns, is as dangerous to our physical health as smoking 15 cigarettes a day, increasing the risk of cardiovascular disease, diabetes, cancer and more. Worse, loneliness is a condition that makes no demographic distinctions; it affects millennials just starting their careers, widowed boomers just ending theirs, empty-nesters, those who are newly divorced, first-year college students a thousand miles away from family and high school friends. Social media, which ostensibly draws people closer, may in fact be atomizing us further, creating virtual connections that have little of the benefits of actual connections.

A gusher of studies since the early 1990s has established the health dividends of social ties. Among people with cardiovascular disease, those with more social connections have a 2.4 times lower risk of mortality within an established period than those with poor social ties. Social connections lower the risk of cancer, speed recovery among people who do contract the disease and reduce the risk of hypertension and other cardiovascular illnesses. Even wound healing improves with social connections. Multiple studies suggest that part of this may come from the psychological boost—including the sense of responsibility—that meaningful relationships provide. When friends and family members are counting on you to be around, you make better health choices, even if they're unconscious. Other studies have shown that similar brain structures control both physical pain and social pain—and that pain relief, through analgesics in the first case and relationships in the second, operate similarly as well. Being socially connected doesn't simply make you healthier, it just plain feels good.

"Intentional communities are about creating attachment, the feeling that someone has your back," says Harvard University psychiatrist Robert Waldinger, director of the Harvard Study of Adult Development, a decades-old survey of the health of a population of Harvard graduates and their descendants. "We often ask people in studies, 'Who would you call in the middle of the night if you were really sick or scared?' Intentional communities can help you have an answer to that question."

It's not easy to come by a firm count of how many intentional communities are out there. Only about 160 of them have been built from the ground up with co-housing in mind, but the regularly updated Fellowship for Intentional Community lists 1,035 communities in all 50 states that have also used existing housing stock to establish co-housing arrangements.

There are urban communities like Commonspace in most major cities. There is Milagro in Tucson, Ariz., 28 single-family homes on 43 desert acres built around a central green space with a shared community center and other facilities. There is Village Hearth Co-Housing, a similar setup in Durham, N.C., but one intended for singles, couples and families in the LGBTQ community. There are other communities for seniors or artists or veterans; there are even rural communities for people who want the independence of owning their own homes but the collective experience of farming the same land.

It's the thousands of shared square feet, not the 375 private ones, that define Commonspace, providing "a lot of collision space."

For each of the communities, the relative compactness of the population is what creates the feeling of togetherness. "You can't possibly know 300 people," says Troy Evans, a real estate developer and the co-founder of Syracuse's Commonspace. "But you can know 50. What we try to do in Commons-

Commonspace offers amenities such as shared outdoor space.

pace is create a neighborhood in a building."

To all appearances, they've succeeded at that. The community's apartments rent for an average of $1,000 per month, which is admittedly pricey for a tiny, 375-square-foot space, though services like thrice-weekly cleaning of all of the common spaces and the costs of activities, like the weekly farm-to-table dinners, are included. And the social benefits—which are impossible to measure in dollars and cents—are included too.

"We set everything up with a town-square feel so when you come out of your door, there's not a long, dark hallway like in most apartment buildings," says Evans. Town squares, of course, can be noisy—not to the liking of even some people who choose to live semi-communally. That's why one of the floors has fewer apartments built around a quiet lounge where locally roasted coffee is always on offer.

The mini-apartments are cleverly laid out, with a platform bed built atop storage cabinets and floor-to-ceiling windows that create an open feel. The bathroom is complete—though it has a shower without a tub—and the kitchenette is limited only by the fact that is has two electric burners instead of a full stove because local regulations forbid open flame in such small quarters. The apartments are all equipped with TVs and high-speed Internet, and a Slack channel allows residents to stay in touch without having to remember dozens of other email addresses.

Still, it's the thousands of shared square feet, not the 375 private ones, that really define the Commonspace experience, providing what Evans describes as "a lot of collision space," which is something people who would otherwise be living alone often crave. "What we've found is demand from people who were landing in Syracuse for the first time and not knowing anyone," he says. "We've got people from eight different countries and seven different states. It's a really cool, diverse group."

That diversity is not only cultural but temperamental. Rose Bear Don't Walk, a Native American in her 20s who at the time was studying environment and forestry at the State University of New York, Syracuse, moved into Commonspace one summer and soon grew friendly with another resident who

In the Monterey Cohousing Community in St. Louis Park, Minn., people of different ages live together.

works in computer coding. His mind operates arithmetically, hers works more emotively, and they took to talking about their different ways of approaching the world.

"He's always building something or talking about building something or listening to podcasts," she says. One day, when she was weaving decorative strands out of plant fibers, she decided to make him a bracelet—a tiny act of kindness and friendship that meant a lot. "It was just this way that our worlds connected," she says. "He is very logical and mathematical and was very excited about this little tiny rope bracelet that I was bringing home."

Meaningful as those types of connections can be, Commonspace residents don't always have a lot of time to make them. Millennials can be transitory—characteristic of most people early in their careers—and the average length of tenancy is just eight months.

Things are very different at other intentional communities, like Milagro in Tucson. There, the buy-in is typically for life. The 28 homes in the landscaped desert space are sometimes available for rent, but they are typically owned by their residents and have sold for anywhere from $175,000 to $430,000, depending on the market. The investment in house and land means an equal investment in the life of the community.

Brian Stark, a married father of two, has lived in Milagro since 2003, two years after the community opened, and considers himself a lifer. For him, the appeal is not so much the community-wide dinner in the dining room every Saturday or the happy hours or the stargazing sessions or the shared holiday parties. It's the easy, collegial pace of the place, unavoidable when neighbors all know one another.

"You almost have to assume that someone may stop to chat with you when you're coming or going," he says. "It took some getting used to, but when we're in a hurry for school or a meeting, we've learned to explain our rush and connect another time."

Even more important are the benefits that

accrue to any community's most vulnerable members: babies and seniors. "For families with very young children, we do baby-care trades," Stark says. "And having a supportive community to help as you grow older is also a wonderful alternative to assisted care living."

Intentional communities are not without stressors. Stark recalls the decade of committee meetings that went into the simple business of deciding whether there should be path lights in the community—important for safety, but murder on the desert's spectacular nighttime sky. Even when the community agreed that lights were a good idea, there was continued wrangling over cost, wattage and more. A similar struggle ensued when it came time to have all 28 homes painted, as residents debated color schemes for the homes' stucco, trim and siding.

Still, the long meetings and compromises are a small price for those suited to intentional communities. That's true of diverse, cross-generational communities like Milagro, and it can be even more so when residents come together with a particular shared need for a particular kind of solidarity—as in the LGBTQ or aging boomer communities.

Shortly after the opening of Village Hearth, the North Carolina LGBTQ community, one of the founders explained to a local reporter that she was tired of hearing about this or that intentional community that has "a nice lesbian couple or a nice gay couple." She and her wife didn't want to be a curiosity in even the friendliest surroundings, so they founded a community in which nothing would be remarkable about them at all.

There is little science so far that explicitly addresses the medical benefits of co-housing arrangements, but the benefits of the human connections the communities provide are being powerfully established. In one meta-analysis of 148 studies gathered from around the world, Julianne Holt-Lunstad, a professor of psychology and neuroscience at Brigham Young University, compared subjects' reported state of loneliness with their overall life expectancy. The total sample size was more than 300,000 people and produced sobering results: adults who are socially isolated have a 50% greater risk of dying from any cause within a given time frame than people who are more connected.

In a follow-up study in which she used census data to assemble an even larger sample group of 3.4 million, the results were a bit less stark, but no less conclusive, with social isolation and loneliness leading to a 30% increased risk of mortality on average. "Of course, being alone is not the same as being lonely," Holt-Lunstad stresses. "Many people enjoy their solitude, and other people can feel lonely even in a group. The key is the subjective experience. If that experience is bad, that's when health can be affected."

More often than not, social media falls into the category of bad rather than good experiences. Even without being trolled or cyberbullied, people can suffer merely as a result of having replaced real relationships with virtual ones. Murthy does not believe social media is all bad, provided it's often used as what he calls "a way station rather than a destination," helping to establish real-life connections.

"Using social media as a way station might mean that if I'm traveling to a different city, in advance of the trip I look on Facebook or LinkedIn to see if I have any friends there," he says. "Then I reach out to them and we get together."

The exact mechanisms that make loneliness so physically damaging are not easy to tease out, but chemical markers in the bloodstream, like cortisol, a stress hormone, or c-reactive proteins, indicators of inflammation, are considered worrisome signs. "They indicate a weakened immune system and metabolic disruption," says Waldinger. "This is when you start to see signs of illness, like rising lipid levels and blood pressure."

Residents of intentional communities also see another kind of benefit to health and happiness in co-housing: as a way of alleviating transitions that can be both stressful and isolating. Stark, the Milagro resident, recalls that when his older daughter, Maia, was born, the Milagro community was still new. Unbidden, the neighbors pitched in to help the family, cleaning their house, making them meals, even doing their laundry so that he and his wife could have the luxury of doing what few parents can do: focus their attention exclusively on their new baby. Since then, the Stark family has returned the favor, making food for people recovering from surgery or offering to make a pickup at an airport.

"Everyone at some point needs someone else," Stark says. Intentional communities, in their quiet way, are helping make sure that powerful human need gets met. □

In the aftermath of World War II, much of Europe lay in ruins, small villages and great cities alike reduced to rubbled hellscapes. The years of military conflict—and the Nazi Holocaust—had slaughtered millions and shattered the economies of England, France, Germany, Italy, Poland, Belgium and beyond, devastating infrastructure and laying waste to industry and agriculture; large swaths of the continent verged on famine.

Only one combatant emerged from history's worst war stronger and more prosperous than before—the United States, separated by an ocean from the carnage and lifted out of the Depression by wartime mobilization. And it largely fell to the Americans to help rebuild and revitalize Europe. The wheels were set in motion in January 1947, when President Harry S. Truman appointed 66-year-old George Catlett Marshall as secretary of state. As army chief of staff, Marshall had transformed the U.S. military from a modest force of 200,000 into a well-trained and well-equipped behemoth of 8.3 million personnel. Prime Minister Winston Churchill had dubbed him "the organizer of victory."

Now Marshall would help organize the peace. Within a few months, his State Department had devised the European Recovery Program, which became known for all time as the Marshall Plan. "It is logical that the United States do whatever it is able to do to assist in the return of normal economic health in the world, without which there can be no political stability and no assured peace," Marshall said, laying out the plan in a commencement speech at Harvard. "Our policy is directed not against any country or doctrine but against hunger, poverty, desperation and chaos."

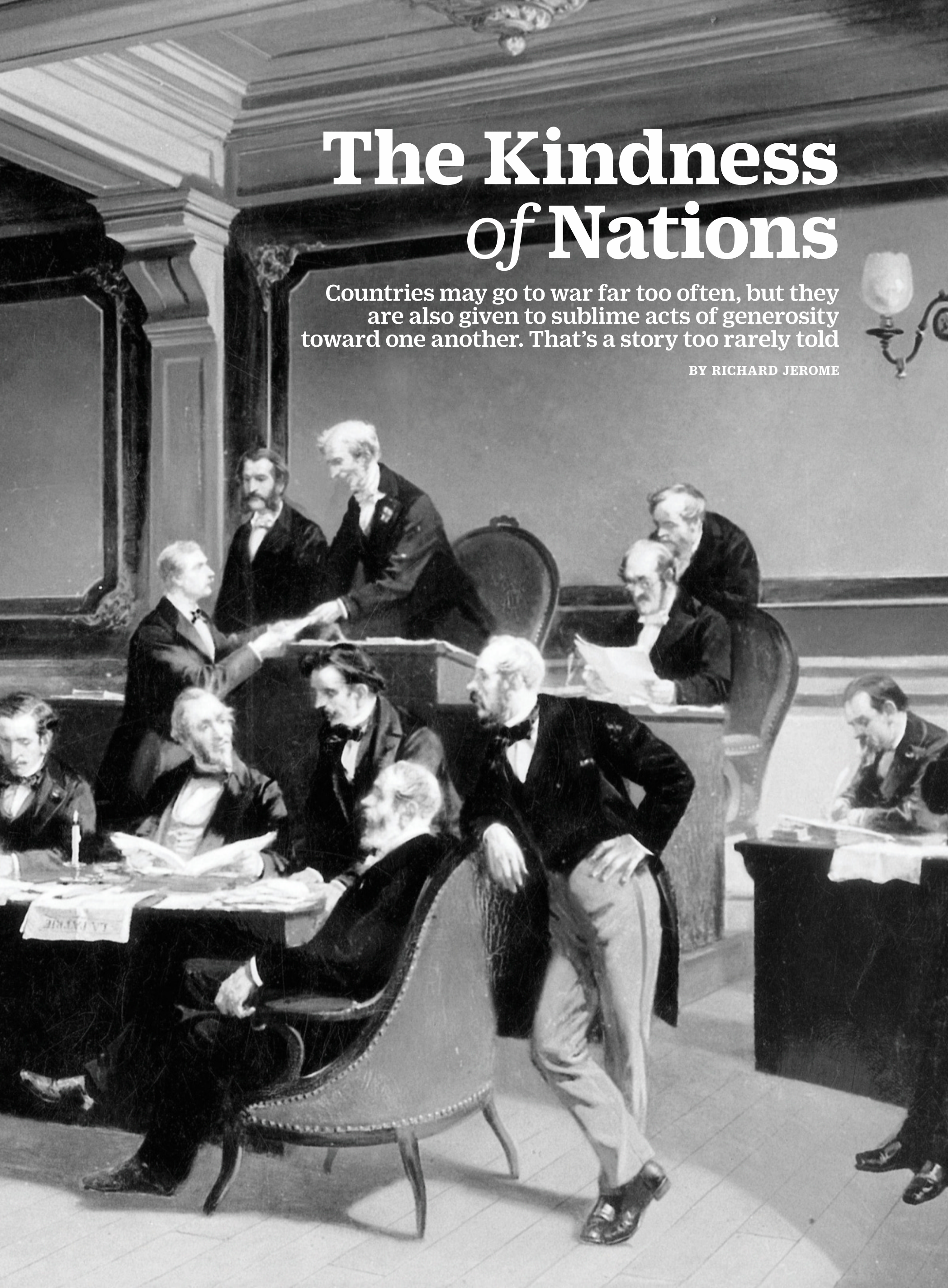
Enacted in 1948, the program ran until 1952 and provided $15 billion (about $160 billion in 2020 currency) toward food, staples, fuel, machinery and other tools to help finance recovery in 16 nations. In the decades since, historians have debated the actual impact of the Marshall Plan—funding from it accounted for less than 3% of the combined national incomes of recipient nations, whose economies grew at a fairly modest rate. Nevertheless, the program is popularly viewed as the gold standard for large-scale foreign economic and humanitarian aid—and whenever there's an intractable national or global problem, someone invariably says, "We need a Marshall Plan" to solve it.

The signing of the first Geneva Convention established ethics across European nations.

The Kindness *of* Nations

Countries may go to war far too often, but they are also given to sublime acts of generosity toward one another. That's a story too rarely told

BY RICHARD JEROME



At the same time, the Marshall Plan is also a quintessential example of the ways in which state-sponsored generosity—as economic or disaster aid and other humanitarian assistance—almost always serves national self-interest. "I think of it as projecting power through acts of kindness—kindness as a sort of Trojan horse," says Michael Barnett, a professor of international relations at George Washington University and the author of the 2011 book *Empire of Humanity: A History of Humanitarianism*. "The Marshall Plan was strategically and economically motivated. We needed to make sure we rebuilt Europe because we needed consumers to buy the things we were producing. But we were also deeply concerned about radicalization in Italy and France

The notion of organized international aid is a relatively recent phenomenon, dating to the middle of the 19th century.

and other parts of Europe and the kind of inroads that might give to communism."

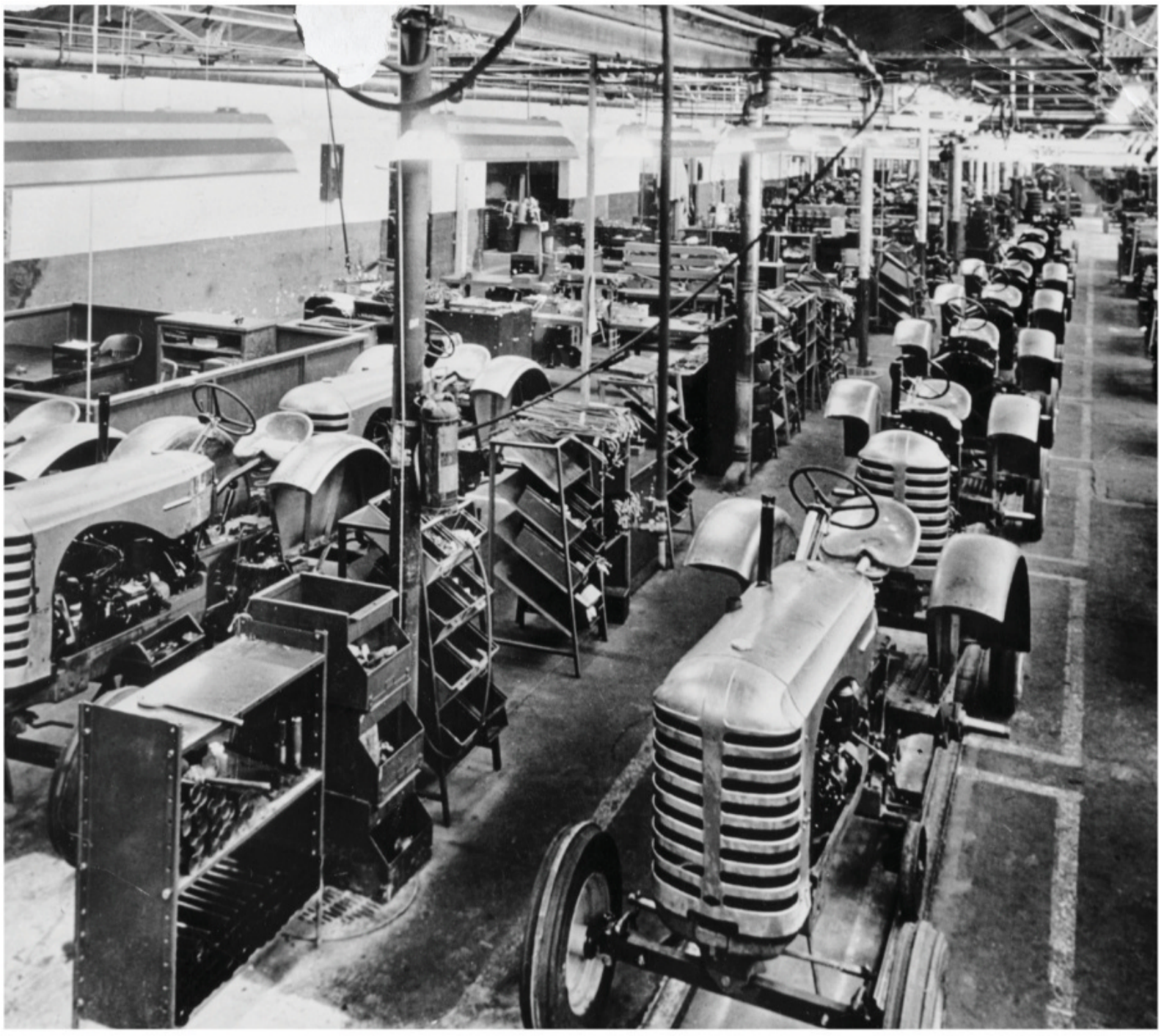
Indeed, one outgrowth of Marshall's work was the establishment in 1949 of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), an alliance that provided member nations security against the Soviet Union (which had derided the Marshall Plan as an "imperialist ploy"). Notably, the CIA received 5% of Marshall Plan funds, and according to the agency's website, "began funding anti-Communist labor, student, and intellectual organizations through a variety of front groups" and, among other things, established Radio Free Europe to counteract Soviet propaganda.

A 21st-century "soft power" analog to the Marshall Plan is China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), a breathtakingly ambitious infrastructure and investment project launched in 2013 by President Xi Jinping. The idea is to build "a vast network of railways, energy pipelines, highways and streamlined border crossings," stretching from East Asia to Europe, write Andrew Chatzky and James McBride of the Council on Foreign Relations. While certainly benefiting recipient countries, the BRI greatly expands China's economic and political influence. "If you look at the pattern, especially of rich, powerful nations, foreign aid goes to countries that meet their strategic and economic priorities," Barnett says. "As far as American foreign aid, much of it goes to Palestine, Iraq, Syria, Libya, Sudan, Afghanistan. These are countries of considerable concern to the U.S. No doubt that there's a lot of need there, but if you were strictly to provide foreign aid based on places with the most need, you'd be shifting your assistance to sub-Saharan Africa, Pakistan and some of the other Southeast Asian countries."

Of course, not all state-sponsored kindness is a naked power grab. "Certainly, you see high-profile events capture the attention of cameras and media," Barnett says. "If there is a tsunami, ethnic cleansing or genocide such as in Rwanda, money tends to flow there." Even then, though, the public-relations value, at home and abroad, factors in heavily. When a country sees itself as a donor, with a reputation for largesse, it bolsters the national psyche. "My perspective is as a Canadian, and Canada prides itself as being a major contributor to humanitarian aid and overseas development assistance," says Andrea Paras, an associate professor of political science at the University of Guelph in Ontario. "Call it prestige, call it soft power, but it's part of Canadians' identity, part of Canada's branding."

At the same time, Paras notes, facts don't always back up the self-talk. "I looked up numbers, what actually happens with Canada's foreign aid," she says. Since 1970, the 37-nation Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development has set a benchmark for overseas development assistance at 0.7% of a nation's GNP. "Last year, only five countries met it—Luxembourg, Norway, Sweden, Denmark and the U.K. In fact, Canada didn't even reach half. If you look at the statistics from 2000 to 2019, our high point was 0.34%, the low point was 0.1%. For the U.S., it was a low of 0.1% in 2000; last year's figure was 0.2%. Of course, the American economy is so massive that in terms of absolute numbers, the U.S. is still the greatest contributor of humanitarian aid."

As far as private giving, Paras adds, "Americans are incredibly generous, especially when there are those major disasters that grab everyone's attention. Nevertheless, compassion fatigue does set in. 'Why am I being asked to give to Somalia again?



Under the Marshall Plan, the U.S. produced machinery such as tractors to boost economic health abroad.

Haven't I been giving to Somalia since 1991?' "

The whole notion of organized international humanitarian aid is a relatively recent phenomenon, dating to the mid-19th century. Two major developments were the birth of the International Red Cross in 1863 and the first Geneva Convention the following year. The Red Cross arose from the work of the Swiss businessman and social activist Jean-Henri Dunant, who on an 1859 trip to Italy to meet Emperor Napoleon III witnessed the gruesome aftermath of the Battle of Solferino, a bloody engagement in the Austro-Sardinian War in which Austria clashed with northern Italian forces and their French allies. When the shooting stopped, some 6,000 troops were dead and 40,000 others lay wounded on the battlefield, with only a few local women to tend them. Dunant forgot all about the purpose of his trip and instead pitched in to help the suffering soldiers.

In an 1862 book, *A Memory of Solferino*, Dunant offered a proposal: "To form relief societies for the purpose of having care given to the wounded in wartime by zealous, devoted and thoroughly qualified volunteers." The next year, Dunant and Swiss jurist, or legal expert, Gustave Moynier co-founded the International Committee for Relief to the Wounded, which in 1876 became the International Committee of the Red Cross.

At the 1864 Geneva Convention, meanwhile, 12 signatory nations agreed to protections, humane treatment and relief for sick and wounded soldiers and civilians. "This was the beginning of the laws

The Red Cross distributes aid supplies to countries in need.

of humanitarian war," Paras says. "When we talk about NGOs that now work in conflict and disaster zones, all of those are products of that quite modern humanitarian system." A crucial catalyst for that system was the advance of technology in the mid-19th century. "The big campaigns we have now could not exist until the mid-19th century, when you have mass communications, the printing press for mass newspapers, reproducing images," says Dominique Marshall, a professor of history at Carleton University in Ottawa and a scholar of humanitarian movements. "There is no way you can see the rise of the Red Cross in the 1860s without the rise of photography and mass printing; you create this vast public that can give money, and it creates the conditions of mass mobilization."

That does not mean that state-sponsored humanitarianism didn't exist earlier. In her book, Paras offers up a history, through case studies, that starts in late-16th-century England, with Queen Elizabeth I's policy of assistance to French Huguenots.

"These were Protestant refugees fleeing the Catholic Wars of Religion in France who made their way to England," Paras explains. "There was altruism in that, but altruism based on the fact that these were religious compatriots, a limited form of altruism. After all, there were massacres of Jews in Spain around the same time, but they weren't helping the Jews—they were helping the Protestants, because it was in Britain's interest to help strengthen itself as

a newly emerging Protestant state against all these Catholic states on the continent. It's an example of how enacting moral obligation across borders is just as much about reaffirming aspects of a nation's own identity as it is about the moral, altruistic side—again, there's always self-interest."

Paras also examines the British abolitionist movement of the late 18th and early 19th centuries, which, she notes, is widely considered the first international human-rights movement. "The leaders of the abolitionist campaign in Britain were innovators when it came to human-rights campaigns, developing tools people use today, like petitions,"

Even the most generous and well-intentioned financial aid doesn't guarantee that the money gets into the right hands.

Paras points out. But by burnishing its humane reputation, Britain also helped legitimize its policy of colonialism. "So again, humanitarianism is two-sided, double-edged." The same was true of the 19th-century British missionary movement—the archetype of which was Dr. David Livingstone, who spoke of a sacred duty to bring the "blessing of civilization" to Africa. For many missionaries, Paras explains, the primary motivation was indeed moral and religious. But others saw this so-called civilizing mission as primarily one of economic development by accessing Africa's natural resources.

In the 20th century, much international relief fell under the umbrella of international organizations such as the League of Nations and, later, the United Nations. Those efforts were always leavened with self-interest, as was the work of the volunteer Peace Corps, established by President John F. Kennedy. For all its accomplishments and good intentions, the Corps has been sharply criticized by some of its own alumni. In "The Peace Corps: An Indictment," an unsigned 1968 piece in the *Harvard Crimson*, former volunteers called the organization "arrogant and colonialist." And Michael Maren, a former Peace Corps volunteer posted to a village on the slope of Mount Kenya, recalled, "The more time I spent in the village, the more aware I became of the connection between the desire to enlighten, to do development work, and the desire to rule."

Another issue with state-sponsored kindness is delivery: even the most generous and well-intentioned financial aid doesn't guarantee that the money gets into the right hands. Paras points to the Haitian earthquake of 2010, which inspired one of the greatest outpourings of international giving ever known. In the U.S., Congress earmarked $4.4 billion for relief and recovery. Internationally the figure was upwards of $13.2 billion. "Haiti really looks like a success story if you just look at the money," Paras says. "But if you look at the actual impact, it's a massive failure. By 2019 only about $2.3 billion had actually been spent, and most of it went through U.S. companies and didn't actually touch the hands of Haitians. A lot of that money was funneled to NGOs or companies that contracted out to assist with recovery but didn't get to local people."

"That's the real sin of all this—for every dollar the U.S. gave, 5 cents got into the hands of a Haitian; the sausage gets sliced every step of the way," adds Barnett. "It's a common complaint by aid recipients. They're always told they're not spending the money well—look how much we gave you! They'll come back and say, 'Where's the money? We don't see it.' It's sitting in the headquarters of some aid organization in Washington, D.C., where a lot of it goes to indirect costs: they have to hire staff, they have buildings to pay for. I've had college students put together campaigns, raising money for a school in Peru, for instance. This kind of grassroots effort often flies under the radar, and it's not huge chunks of change, but it's a sense of compassion and it's very encouraging."

Regardless of the self-interested motives that lie behind international giving, there's no denying the genuine altruism of the people who actually do the work of humanitarian aid, whether it's in an office or in a distant disaster or war zone. "I don't want to paint an overly cynical picture," Barnett says. "I very much admire these folks. And many are in as dangerous a business as you'll find, certainly much more dangerous than being a peacekeeper or a soldier in terms of the casualty rates. They're not angels or saints, but they care deeply, and they are committed. If they were doing it for the money, this would not be the business they'd be in." □

The Bar *at* Ground Zero

Bartenders are more than servers. They're empaths and listeners—and their bars, as this example shows, can be sources of healing

BY DR. BRIAN GOLDMAN

O'Hara's Restaurant and Pub is near where the Twin Towers once stood.

On an overcast morning in September, I stand in the middle of a crowd roughly 15 people wide and 25 deep. We stand silently in the middle of the intersection of Greenwich and Cedar Streets in Lower Manhattan—young families, middle-aged men in ball caps, tourists in tank tops. A white-haired man in a pale blue shirt and khaki pants, wearing a small knapsack, locks the fingers of his hands and looks down. An Iraq War veteran with his head shaved quietly tells stories of his two tours of duty to his travel companions.

At 8:46 a.m., bells softly ring in memory of the exact moment American Airlines Flight 11 struck the North Tower of the World Trade Center. It's the anniversary of 9/11, the day when 19 Al Qaeda terrorists hijacked four U.S. passenger jets, two of which were crashed into the North and South Towers of the World Trade Center.

The mostly silent ceremony goes on for nearly four hours, until the names of all 2,983 men, women and children killed in the attacks at the World Trade Center site are read and remembered by loved ones. As the day marches on, many of the invitees make their way slowly back to the corner of Greenwich and Cedar. They head to a bar like no other. It's a place with a wounded yet still beating heart that mirrors perfectly those of the patrons it serves. A place that empathizes with those who lost family on 9/11, especially the first responders who ran toward danger that day. A place that serves empathy along with the beer.

O'Hara's, a traditional Irish pub, sits right across the street from Fire Department of New York (FDNY) Ladder Company 10 and Engine Company 10, the only fire station inside Ground Zero. Immediately above the bar, an American flag drapes the ceiling. As I move closer, something else catches my eye. Embroidered insignias of firefighters, paramedics, police and other first responders cover the wood molding and almost every bit of wall space in the bar. Seven thousand patches and counting. A tall man of about 60 years of age notices that I'm looking at the patches.

"That's mine over there," says Paul Fisher, pointing to a crest that bears the insignia of the Monmouth County Sheriff's Office in New Jersey. "Like all the other ones, it shows that we were here in this area at that time. We were the Bucket Brigade. We were loading the buckets up and handing them down throughout the line. We were on top of the Pile."

Lining this wall of O'Hara's are thousands of patches belonging to 9/11 first responders.

The Pile is the term used by rescue workers to describe the tons of wreckage that remained from the collapse of the World Trade Center. "Any bucket that contained a body part was labeled with a ribbon that they had to tie on," says Fisher. "As the bucket went by, you knew a body part was in there. At the bottom of the Pile, they would separate body parts from the other debris."

Fisher returned to O'Hara's on the first anniversary of 9/11; he's been coming each anniversary ever since. Like Fisher, Robert McGuire returns to O'Hara's each anniversary. But McGuire's connections are a lot closer to Ground Zero. The retired firefighter was on his way to work at Ladder 10, Engine 10, when the first plane struck.

"I got here as the second tower collapsed," says McGuire. "We were over by Trinity Church, which is one of the few spots around that didn't get crushed."

I ask the retired firefighter what kinds of conversations he's had with the bartenders at O'Hara's today.

"None yet," he says. "We stay pretty closed ranks with our brother firefighters."

All the same, as the large tables by the wall are filling up with families who took part in the memorial service, I notice a man in his 50s as he walks slowly from table to table. Between tables, he greets the horde of first responders with strong grips and hugs. Paul Mackin turns to face me as I walk toward him. He looks weary.

"Welcome to O'Hara's," says Mackin, the co-owner.

I'm here to meet Mackin because I'm told he's the kindest bartender at the kindest bar in the world. Mackin sits me down, offers me a pint and a story.

"A guy I'd never met before was here with his three daughters," says Mackin. "He lost his twin brother—a firefighter—in 9/11. He was here with his wife and he hung his brother's patch up in the bar.

He was so proud. I met his daughters. We started talking, and his daughters pulled me aside and said, 'You know you made his day. He's so happy.' That's what we do here. We offer hope for good people."

He also offers impromptu counseling. Mackin tells me about a firefighter named Sean who was a "chauffeur"—slang for the driver of a fire engine.

"It was about 9:30 in the morning on one of these 9/11 anniversaries," Mackin recalls. "Sean was in the bathroom crying. I asked him what was wrong, and he said, 'It's too difficult for me. I drove these people to their death. I was the chauffeur.' "

What the heck does a bartender say about that?

" 'Yes, Sean, you were the chauffeur,' " Mackin recalls telling Sean. " 'You did your job. You stayed with the rig. They did their job and tried to save people. What you need to do is live your life because you're still here. God spared your life for some reason, so you better figure out what it is and you better go live it.' "

I'm here to meet Mackin because I'm told he's the kindest bartender at the kindest bar in the world. He offers impromptu counseling.

Did his pep talk work?

"He was OK," says Mackin. "A good bartender manages his customers. He drives the bus, and he has to make sure the right people sit next to each other. He has to make sure the two quiet guys with their computers sit next to each other. Neither wants to talk, but the crowd wants to talk, so you sit them next to each other. Then the job does itself." Mackin can keep track of the moods of 20 customers at a time, and he says he has helped customers through the worst of crises.

"A guy worked as a roadie for a famous band," Mackin recalls. "He was dating a good friend of mine from Jersey. They were living in an apartment around the corner from here. I became friendly with them over the course of time. He was a lighting tech, and he had a good job."

But his drinking started to get out of hand.

"I'd let him pass out in the car," says Mackin. "My wife and I would drop him off on the way home."

Mackin says the breakup and other things made the roadie re-examine his life. "He went to rehab, and he's been clean for two years," says Mackin. "He got his life back."

And that is when something wonderful happened.

"He came in to see me, and we spoke," says Mackin. "Then she came in to see me, and we spoke. She started crying when we started talking about him because she loved him. They're back together."

Mackin calls his job his passion, and by that he means the people, the service, not just the money he puts in his pocket at the end of the day. But that job was threatened by the 9/11 attacks when the bar, like so many other buildings in the neighborhood, sustained serious damage from the falling debris.

Still, despite considerable challenges, O'Hara's reopened six months after 9/11. At first, there was scant business. Mackin says two things saved the bar. One was that the area surrounding O'Hara's became a residential neighborhood, bringing customers seven days a week. The other was the decision to make O'Hara's a special place for 9/11 survivors and their families. That began spontaneously on the first anniversary of 9/11, when a customer named Big John ripped a patch off a first responder's uniform and stapled it to a wall. By the end of that first anniversary evening, there were more than 250 patches stapled to the wall.

Keane says the patches have had a snowball effect on visiting clientele.

"They're happy to come in, and they are honored to put their patch up next to all the other guys that have been here," he says. "They feel comfortable and wanted."

THE BRAZEN HEAD is a trendy bar on Atlantic Avenue in Cobble Hill, a 40-block neighborhood next to Brooklyn Heights. It's a 20-minute cab ride from O'Hara's. From the large gaudy sign in brass-colored letters on a blue background, it doesn't look or feel anything like the Irish pub where I've spent a good part of the day.

After my time at O'Hara's, my search for other empathic bartenders brought me to this place. The only two obvious things it has in common with O'Hara's are beer (15 craft beers on tap) and a dartboard.

Katharine Heller is sitting by the bar. The slim, fortyish woman with medium-length brown hair is wearing a pink and black shift dress. Heller has been a bartender since she was 22. She teaches mixology at a school and hosts a podcast called *Tell the Bartender*. Heller doesn't work at the Brazen Head; she's brought me here to watch and learn. I ask her to describe the mood in the bar.

"It's a very jovial feeling," she says. Her eyes do a systematic scan of the room as she speaks. "We have here people who maybe weren't even in the city during 9/11. This is a bar full of people looking to have fun." She trains her sights on the bartender, a neatly groomed man in his early to mid-30s who moves quickly through his routine.

"I don't want to talk about it too much because he's standing right there," she whispers as she leans toward me. "He's nice. He's just doing his job on a regular shift. I could be totally wrong, but I find that men have not been taught that fostering a feeling of empathy is a positive thing."

I ask her what empathic qualities she brings to the job of bartending.

"A good empath can sense basic energy and know [it] without even saying a word," she says. "The second a customer walks in, I always know what they are going to be like. I always know when to be worried for someone and when someone is not going to be a problem."

Heller pays attention to nonverbal cues. Take sadness, for example. "If you take a second to look in someone's eyes, you can see sadness even if they're smiling," she says. "If they want to talk about it, I just let them know that I'm around. I might want to keep an eye on them to make sure they're not drinking too much. I kind of feel responsible for everyone's emotions and everyone's experience at the bar."

Heller is good at detecting the angry customer who is about to explode, and she's become an expert at defusing tension."If a fight breaks out between two dudes, the female bartender breaks it up," she says. "If you send a male bartender out there, something [bad] is more likely to happen. A woman takes them by surprise."

Like Mackin, Heller has her share of stories of the times when she used her empathy to make a difference.

"Some customers of mine found out that their apartment was burning down while they were in the bar," she says. "I called them that night. I organized a fundraiser for them. We got the whole neighborhood together."

"Are bartenders supposed to be empathic?" I ask.

"A million percent," she says. "There's this idea that bartenders are supposed to be gruff, sassy and rude. Truthfully, those are not the ones that get tipped well or have returning customers."

I ask if she thinks she can teach empathy to bartenders. "Yes and no," she says. "I think that most people have empathy. I also think there are some people who are just hopeless."

She has an interesting way of telling rude bartenders how they did. "I always just tip really well," she says. "I make sure to look them in the eye and just say, 'Here's your tip.' Then I walk out. And they know. It's money that burns because no bartender wants to earn it that way."

At the back of the bar next to the dartboard, one of the bartenders grabs a microphone. "It's almost that time," says the bartender. "That's right: a very special Sunday edition of Trivia Challenge."

A few kilometers away, they're commemorating 9/11 at O'Hara's. At the Brazen Head, they're doing a trivia contest. Heller scans the room at the Brazen Head and comes to a conclusion.

"There are a lot of people here who were not in New York during 9/11," she says. "This neighborhood was in the direct line of smoke and ashes. The fire was burning for four months. We smelled bodies burning for months. Now it's younger blood and new people," she says.

AT 7 P.M., the sun is a giant ball reflected in the Hudson River as it sets over New Jersey. Thin wisps of orange light penetrate the buildings around O'Hara's. The 9/11 crowd has thinned considerably. Most of the families have left. Paul Mackin looks exhausted yet serene. He has another story he wants to tell me—another story of empathy.

"My wife and I usually give money to a family every year for Christmas," he says. "Instead of giving Christmas gifts to our kids, we donate $1,500 to a family. A friend of mine told me a story about a 9/11 firefighter whose son was playing in the football championship down in Florida. I found out that he didn't have the money to go. So we made him our family for Christmas." Mackin and his wife invited the firefighter to their house and handed him $1,500 in cash. He told the man that

O'Hara's has become a living historical artifact of 9/11, honoring those who served and those who were lost.

he should go to Florida with the other parents and watch his son play.

"The man went down to Florida," says Mackin. "His son's team won the championship. Everything was great and wonderful, and another father decided to take the team to Universal Studios." The dad Mackin helped with some cash said he was too tired and wanted to remain at the hotel so he could relax by the pool.

"So he goes down by the pool and sees a girl floating face down in the water," says Mackin. "The guy pulls her out of the pool, gives her mouth-to-mouth resuscitation because he's an FDNY firefighter, and saves her. He calls me up from Florida and says, 'You are not going to believe how far your $1,500 just went. I just saved somebody's life.' "

Mackin breaks into a smile as he shakes his head.

"If more people would just pay it forward like that, the world would be a different place," he says.

O'Hara's pub is not where the horror of 9/11 happened. But it's close by. Like the firefighters who tried to save comrades buried under tons of steel and concrete, it was wounded badly—but lived to tell about it. And in so doing, it became a place where hope could begin. □

From the book The Power of Kindness: Why Empathy Is Essential in Everyday Life *by Dr. Brian Goldman © 2018. Published by HarperCollins Publishers Ltd. All rights reserved.*

Leon Logothetis has traveled to 100 countries to spread kindness.

The Kindness Guy

Few people devote their lives to being kind. Leon Logothetis is one of them—and he's made a career of it

BY EMILY JOSHU

"Kindness is the best medicine." This was the epiphany that had been scrawled on the back of a cardboard box that Leon Logothetis stumbled upon one day. The former London stockbroker was walking along Los Angeles's Hollywood Boulevard in 2013 when he caught the message, held by a homeless man. It became the catalyst not only for a personal revelation but for an international franchise promoting kindness, good deeds and respect .

In the television series *The Kindness Diaries*—which is streaming on Netflix and BYUtv—Logothetis, a.k.a. "The Kindness Guy," travels across the globe on a vintage yellow motorbike or in a 50-plus-year-old canary-yellow Volkswagen Beetle on a quest to receive and reciprocate kindness. While he relies on Good Samaritans he meets along the way to provide shelter, food and gas, he repays those deeds with anything from building the floor of a school for underprivileged children in Peru to saving 100 stray dogs in Ecuador.

Logothetis has traveled to more than 100 countries and visited every continent. So far he has put $200,000 of his own money into his acts of kindness. In 2019, he announced that *The Kindness Diaries* had been renewed for a third season, which will take him from Scotland to Singapore; its debut date is yet to be announced. To encapsulate the generous spirit of *The Kindness Diaries*, here are a few noteworthy episodes and their vital lessons.

Tales from *The Kindness Diaries*

1. THE GIFT OF JOY

In the ninth episode of Season 1, after his motorbike briefly breaks down, Logothetis rides to Darjeeling, India, the home of the celebrated tea. He runs into a fellow Englishman, with whom he shares an English breakfast tea, and stays for the night. Journeying to Bhutan, Logothetis is in search of the region's concept of "gross national happiness." He meets the Minister of the Environment, who maintains the region as one of the cleanest in the world and who explains that the concept of gross national happiness means that while Buddhism is the state religion, people can believe whatever they want within the four walls of their homes. Trying to say that one's god is better than another's, he says, is a violation of human rights. This inspires Logothetis to search for his own experience of gross national happiness, and he eventually stumbles upon an orphanage that has cared for nearly 60,000 children in 25 years. Awestruck, he gifts the orphanage with new sporting equipment, two new water purifiers and a new library.

2. THE GIFT OF SIGHT

In episode 11 of Season 1, Logothetis is determined to find kindness and love after traveling to two horrific monuments in Cambodia. He first stops at the Tuol Sleng Genocide Museum, also known as S21. In the 1970s, the structure was one of 150 death camps under the Khmer Rouge regime. Just six miles away, Logothetis also visits the Killing Fields of Choeung Ek, where approximately 17,000 people were murdered. Many of the victims had previously been imprisoned at S21.

Logothetis later arrives in Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam, and meets a woman named Vin who believes it is in her nature to help people. She helps her friend receive eye surgery and leads Logothetis to a local clinic, where the sole physician treats 30,000 cases per year for free. Logothetis chooses to fund 100 surgeries.

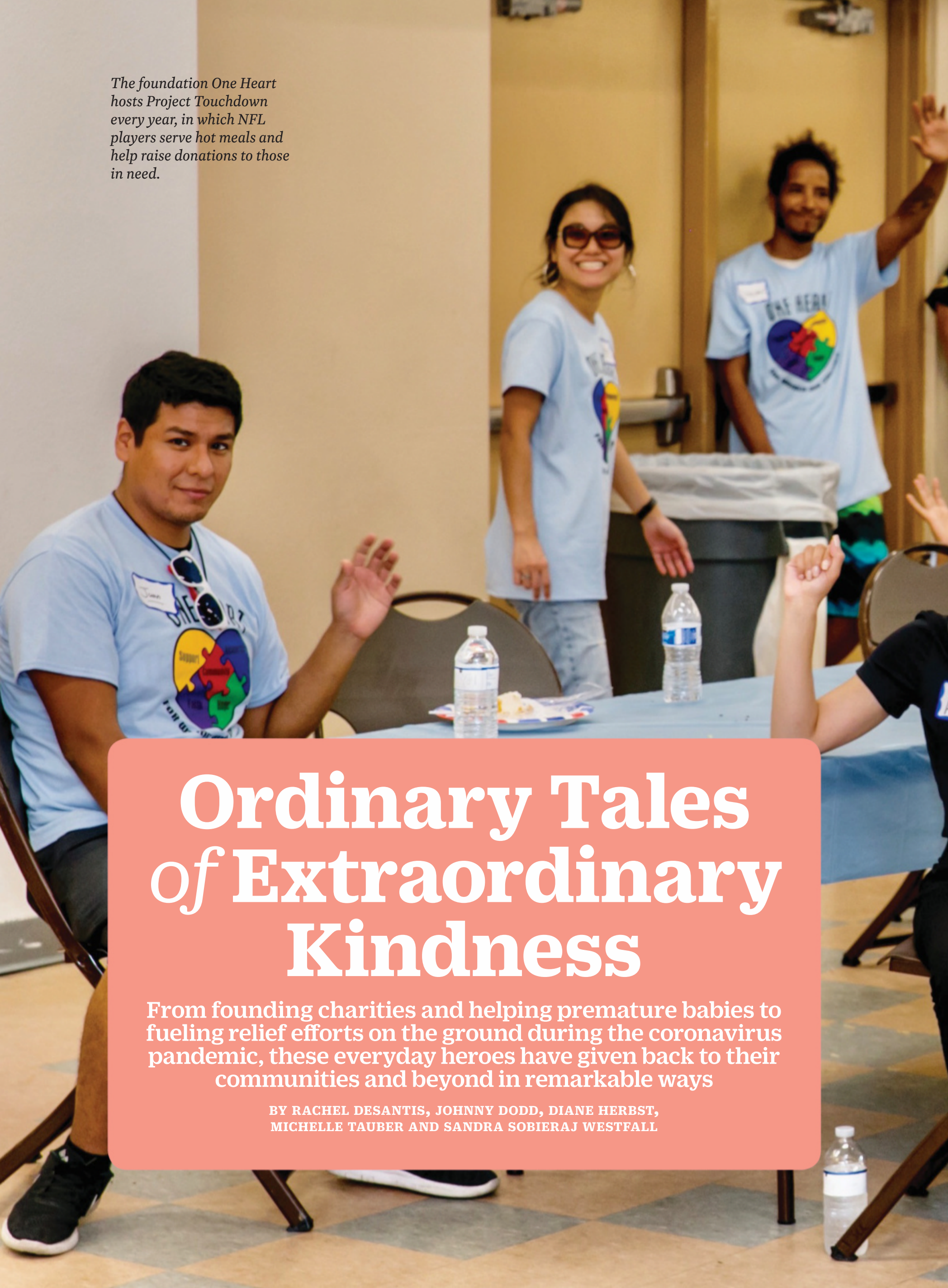
3. THE GIFT OF SECURITY

In the second episode of Season 2, Logothesis conducts a social experiment by approaching a man named Tony to ask for a place to stay. Tony, it turns out, is homeless. Despite not having a permanent roof over his head, Tony offers Logothetsis a place in his encampment for the night, along with food, clothing and protection. Logothetis learns not only about Tony's resourcefulness and circumstances but also the meaning of true wealth: not money or material possessions, but actions that come from the heart. A stranger with what many would deem nothing gave Logothetis everything he had. The next morning, Logothetis asks Tony to take him to a place where he feels safe and happy. This is his old school. Here, Logothetis and the crew transform Tony's life with an apartment and the opportunity to go back to school and become a chef.

4. THE GIFT OF WINNIE LOVE

After traveling across a dangerous highway in Ecuador and sleeping near an active volcano in episode 8 of Season 2, Logothetis meets a woman named Rina who is caring for countless stray dogs. Logothetis had credited his own dog, Winston—named after Winston Churchill—for saving his life through the mischievous puppy's unconditional love. He coined that type of love "Winnie love." In response to her rough upbringing—she says she felt like a forgotten street dog—Rina is determined to save as many strays in Ecuador as she can. Their love for animals creates a strong bond between Logothetis and Rina, which inspires Logothetis to pay to help save 100 stray dogs. ☐

ILLUSTRATIONS BY LAN TRUONG FOR TIME



The foundation One Heart hosts Project Touchdown every year, in which NFL players serve hot meals and help raise donations to those in need.

Ordinary Tales *of* Extraordinary Kindness

From founding charities and helping premature babies to fueling relief efforts on the ground during the coronavirus pandemic, these everyday heroes have given back to their communities and beyond in remarkable ways

BY RACHEL DESANTIS, JOHNNY DODD, DIANE HERBST, MICHELLE TAUBER AND SANDRA SOBIERAJ WESTFALL

ONE HEART
Support
Resources
Community
Faith
Hope
For WOMEN and CHILDREN

TURNING PAIN INTO PURPOSE

When Stephanie Bowman—homeless and addicted to cocaine—placed her 5-year-old daughter Amber in a Dumpster as she foraged for food, a stranger who owned a nearby restaurant shouted at her to stop. "She said, 'You'll never put your kid in a Dumpster again. I'll make sure we have something here every day,'" Bowman recalls. "And she did. I knew that was the purest sign somebody loved us. Someone who didn't even know us."

It was an act of kindness that Bowman wouldn't forget—even when she hit rock bottom in 1999 after her daughters Amber and Katie were placed in foster care. She got sober and regained custody of her girls 18 months later, and in 2009 she founded One Heart for Women and Children, a nonprofit in Orlando, Fla., that now serves 3,000 people a month, providing food, clothing, shelter and more. Her next goal is to open a shelter for those in need. "When I was homeless, there were a lot of people who helped me get to that next place in life," says Bowman. "We encourage people to share their stories: 'How did you end up where you are right now? What is that thing in your life where it shifted from light to darkness?' There is no shame, no judgment. Everybody's time of transition looks different. And then it becomes, 'Who can I help today?'"

HELPING PARENTS OF PREEMIES

Dana Graves had a fun way to tell her husband, Arkell, she was pregnant: She placed a stack of burger buns and an ultrasound photo in the oven. "Arkell was just boo-hooing and crying," says Dana, whose video of his reaction went viral. In October 2015, Dana gave birth to their son Kaleb—four months early. The Dinwiddie, Va., couple had already endured four miscarriages and a stillbirth, so the 356 days Kaleb spent in the neonatal intensive-care unit at Richmond's VCU Medical Center were especially worrisome. The love and support they received during the ordeal helped them through it. (While Kaleb has cerebral palsy and breathes through a tracheotomy tube, Dana says, "We just see [our] perfect little boy.") The experience inspired them to create the Baby Buns for Life foundation to help other parents of babies in the NICU. "I don't care if it's one day or 300 days—when you have a child in NICU, every day seems like eternity," says Dana. She and Arkell provide meals and preemie outfits, along with Baby Buns Blessing Bags filled with snacks, lotions and hand sanitizer, to NICUs from Richmond to Austin. "We received so much love worldwide," says Arkell, "it was only right for us to give back."

KEEPING A PROMISE TO BE KIND

When it comes to good deeds, Jon Potter has already performed more than his fair share—but he insists he's just getting started. His inspiration came in 2015, after a woman approached him at a gas station to ask for a ride to a domestic-violence shelter—and he turned her down. "I immediately regretted it," he says. "I tried to find her [later], but she was gone." Potter's remorse led him to an epiphany—and to a vow: "I decided to dedicate my life to saying yes anytime someone asks for help.

From left: Jon Potter, who has dedicated his life to saying yes to those in need; Dana Graves, founder of the Baby Buns for Life foundation, and family; Wayne Irwin and daughter Heather playing the bagpipes for frontline workers.

Potter estimates he's done good deeds for more than a thousand strangers, from moving furniture to pet-sitting.

You have to say yes in the moment, or opportunities slip by."

Since then the Pittsburgh-area resident estimates that he's done good deeds for more than a thousand strangers, from fixing broken windows to moving furniture and pet-sitting. He finds most of his altruistic projects on Reddit. Not long ago, he stumbled across a post by a woman whose father needed a kidney. Potter tracked down Mike Moore, a retired health-food executive, and learned that only 5% of Moore's kidney was functioning. "The moment I heard his voice," says Potter, "I knew I wanted to do this." Adds a grateful Moore: "I owe him a debt of gratitude for the rest of my life."

PLAYING THE PIPES TO HONOR THOSE ON THE FRONT LINES

Every evening after watching his daughter Nicole leave for her night shift as an intensive-care nurse during the early part of the COVID-19 pan-

From left: Elena Tompkins and Sarah Cannova of Feed the Fight; Dr. Ee Tay packing tablets for hospitals and nursing homes; Frederick Joseph, the founder of #RentRelief.

demic, retired firefighter Wayne Irwin and his younger daughter Heather tucked their bagpipes under their arms and headed outside themselves. Repurposing a centuries-old tradition for the Great Highland bagpipe, which has played soldiers into battle since the late 18th century, the duo performed a nightly "Sunset Solidarity" concert on the sidewalks around their neighborhood in Downers Grove, Ill. "It's a way to show our support for everyone who's trying to help in this crisis," said Heather.

DARING THE WORLD TO DO GOOD

On the morning of Aug. 3, 2019, Rose Gandarilla and her then 11-year-old son, Ruben Martinez, had planned on stopping by the Walmart near their home in El Paso, Texas, for school supplies—until

Joseph began to hear from people who couldn't pay their rent amid COVID-19 layoffs, so he launched #RentRelief on GoFundMe, raising more than $270,000.

they saw police cars and ambulances flying past them toward the store. Later at home, they saw on the news that a gunman had killed 20 shoppers (the final tally rose to 22). "Ruben was terrified, asking me, 'Can't we just order everything to our house from now on?'" says Gandarilla. He disappeared into his room and emerged 30 minutes later with his plan for "The El Paso Challenge"—a list of acts of kindness (from visiting a nursing home to buying lunch for a friend) he would perform in tribute to each individual who died. "I wanted to honor the people who were killed because that's what we should do and because I believe kindness always overpowers evil," says Ruben, whose first act was to bring food to first responders at the scene. He's since inspired thousands of people, some as far away as Australia. "I've been thinking I should change it to 'The Global Challenge,'" he says. "Everyone should be kind, not just in El Paso, but every part of the world."

AIDING RESTAURANTS— AND HEALTH-CARE STAFF TOO

A chat with a friend who owns several struggling restaurants in Washington, D.C., inspired health-care lobbyist Elena Tompkins: "I was like, 'Everybody wants to support hospital workers, and who wouldn't love meals from these restaurants?'" With help from pal Sarah Cannova, Tompkins founded Feed the Fight (feedthefight.org), which raises funds to purchase meals from restaurants to give to health-care staff—more than 10,000 meals since mid-March. "When you order lunch for 75 people, that makes the restaurant happy," says Tompkins. And the health-care workers? "They think it's a warm hug," says Cannova.

COVERING THE RENT FOR THOSE IN NEED

Author Frederick Joseph had previously raised money for a New York City food bank when he began to hear from people who couldn't pay their rent amid COVID-19 pandemic layoffs. He launched #RentRelief on GoFundMe, raising more than $270,000 to help some 800 people pay their bills. "We get people sending pictures of empty refrigerators and videos of their children asking for help," says Joseph. After vetting, requests are met with a $200 payment through cash apps PayPal or Zelle. "The money goes fast," says Joseph. "For everyone we help, there are thousands we can't."

CONNECTING LOVED ONES TO PATIENTS IN THE ICU

When emergency room physician Ee Tay saw that coronavirus patients at NYC Health + Hospitals/Bellevue were alone in quarantine with no way to communicate with their loved ones, she knew she had to act. "Families need some sort of closure," says Tay, who began collecting new and used video tablets from friends that could be used for calls between relatives desperate to see a family member for what might be the last time. Her efforts drew the attention of Bank of New York Mellon, which donated 600 tablets to Tay. She is now planning to share the surplus of electronics with other hospitals and nursing homes throughout the hardest-hit areas of New York City, especially underserved communities. "A lot of them don't have access to Wi-Fi or a tablet," says Tay. "I am hoping the ones I've collected will be able to help." ◻

3

How *to* Be Kind

Self-Forgiveness 2.0

Sometimes kindness is in the first person. Here's how to be as generous with yourself as you are with others

BY EILEEN DASPIN

Practicing self-forgiveness helps you focus on the future and move on.

As the father of two teenagers, Shadd Maruna knows what it's like to lose his temper every now and then. And when it happens, the 48-year-old professor tries to keep things in perspective; instead of kicking himself, he goes for kindness. Because things happen. Because buttons get pushed. "I'm a good dad 95% of the time. I try to recognize that," says Maruna, who grew up in Illinois and now lives in Belfast, Ireland. After reminding himself he is not his slipup, Maruna looks for lessons: "What led me to do this? What was the context? What were my triggers? What steps should I take to keep it from happening again?" He apologizes to his kids and lets it go.

When it comes to parenting, self-forgiveness, of course, is a survival tactic. It comes with the territory. But the reality is that the same principle is relevant to a good chunk of human error. When you've made a mistake, you have to forgive yourself to get back on track. That applies whether it's something that hurts just you (going keto rogue and knocking back a carton of Chunky Monkey) or something bigger that hurts someone or something other than you (spouses, friends, strangers. Your community. The planet). You basically need self-forgiveness any time you violate a standard you've established and want to correct course. While there's an obvious moral distinction between an ice cream binge and cheating on your spouse or polluting, the same self-forgiveness formula holds. You try to move from guilt and shame to doing the right thing and learning from your mistake. The difference comes in how you make amends, or as self-forgiveness experts sometimes put it, "close the injustice gap." The more serious the misstep, the more work you'll have to do and the longer it will take to get it done.

The process starts with identifying the wrong. This is important because consequences are one thing; moral choices are something else. If you didn't do anything wrong but feel bad about an outcome, that's regret, not guilt, and the self-forgiveness track isn't relevant. At the same time, if you look at your intentions and know you made an immoral choice, then you have to acknowledge it.

The same goes if you didn't intend to harm someone but did—by, say, looking at a cellphone while driving and hitting a pedestrian who stepped into the road. If there are others involved, you have to get their buy-in to undo damage and restore trust. Self-forgiveness has to be sincere and involve a

willingness to change. "Hey, I'm not going to let it bother me," for example, is not self-forgiveness. That's letting yourself off the hook. Denial and shifting the blame won't work either. Instead, you need to "fully acknowledge 'I screwed up, I did it, I accept a piece of me is not perfect,' " says Fred Luskin, the director of the Stanford University Forgiveness Projects. Only then can you move ahead, he adds. "People tell themselves 'Just get over it.' But you need to recognize your error in order to grow."

In some ways, we're hardwired to forgive ourselves: no one wants to walk around knowing they've done something wrong to their own psyche or hurt someone else. That's why we feel guilt and shame, which motivate us to fix the problem. Done correctly, giving yourself a pass is not only kind but constructive as well. Self-forgiveness allows you to get on with life. It helps preserve relationships. It's better for your temperament and makes you more productive. It keeps you from being bitter and mistrustful. Research even suggests that self-forgiveness may reduce stress levels, which in turn could benefit your health, from the size of your hippocampus (your brain's memory center) to your digestive function to relieving stress-related illnesses.

After centuries with barely a mention, self-forgiveness is a thriving area of study with its own specialists and intervention techniques.

The challenge is that many factors affect the process of self-forgiveness, and the risks can be as dangerous as the rewards can be gratifying. Some research suggests that self-forgiveness can be a crutch to make you feel you're in the right, which in turn can lead to a lack of compassion and victim-blaming or disrespect for the victim. It can also prevent you from change, a phenomenon found in some gamblers. Plus, it's hard, time-consuming work, says Luskin, "not a quickie, 1-2-3 thing or the kumbaya moment," he adds. "It's the work of taking responsibility, including absolution."

Unlike forgiveness, a topic that has occupied philosophers and theologians since ancient times, self-forgiveness is something of a Johnny-come-lately for the world's big thinkers. One of the first to tackle the subject was political philosopher Hannah Arendt, famous for her study of Nazism and Stalinism. In her 1958 book, *The Human Condition*, Arendt argued that self-forgiveness is not possible because forgiveness has to come from the person who was wronged. "For no-one can forgive himself," she wrote. "Forgiving and promising enacted in solitude or isolation remain without reality and can signify no more than a role played before oneself."

It wasn't until the tail end of the 20th century that geopolitics laid the groundwork for a self-forgiveness boomlet among academics—and even then, the subject was an afterthought. It started with the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989, which was followed by the election of Nelson Mandela, South Africa's first Black president, in 1994; and in 1998, by the Belfast Agreement, ending much of the violence between Northern Ireland and Britain. The global conversation turned to forgiveness. Historic adversaries were coming together. Communists and capitalists. Blacks and whites. Catholics and Protestants.

To put the phenomenon in context, the John Templeton Foundation, a U.S.-based organization that supports philosophical research, poured millions of dollars into studies of forgiveness, according to Everett Worthington, the author of numerous books and academic papers on self-forgiveness, who participated in the Templeton initiative. When scholars exhausted that line of research, they turned their attention to self-forgiveness, a subject one influential paper identified as "the stepchild of forgiveness."

After centuries with barely a mention, self-forgiveness today is a thriving area of study with its own specialists, manuals and intervention techniques. In the past 15 years, there have been some 500 papers on self-forgiveness by Worthington's count, and contrary to Arendt's formulation, the prevailing view is that self-forgiveness is not only possible but also important to humankind's well-being.

For physical health, the supporting evidence is indirect, tied to the connection between self-blame and levels of cortisol, a stress hormone, but it's compelling. A 2016 study published in the *Journal of Positive Psychology* showed that self-forgiveness

East Germans poured through the newly opened Berlin Wall to greet long-lost friends and family in 1989.

was connected to a lower heart rate and a better functioning cardiovascular system in healthy college students. An older study of a community in the Midwest from 2003 found better blood pressure readings in high-income whites who practiced self-forgiveness and lower levels of cortisol in low-income whites who did so. And research from 2001 linked self-forgiveness to lower white blood cell counts and higher T-helper cell ratios. Referring to guilt, self-blame and self-condemnation, Worthington notes that "all of these things up your cortisol, and if that is continually elevated, it affects every system in your body."

The suggestion that self-forgiveness can affect our mental health is even stronger, with dozens of studies showing a correlation between the two. Timothy Wenger, an electrician from Kansas City, Mo., knows this from personal experience. In 2018, Wenger, then 29 years old, left the company he ran with his brother to start a business of his own and to move halfway across the globe, to Serbia, to be with a woman he'd fallen in love with. But when Wenger's new business venture sputtered, the romance did too, and he ended things to return home, broke and heartbroken. Wenger was on a job in Arizona when he hopped on his skateboard to go to the grocery store and woke up in the intensive care unit with a traumatic brain injury. It took him six months to recover from the accident, and during that time, he blamed himself for everything. For leaving his job. For breaking up with his girlfriend. For returning to the U.S. For not having enough money to buy a car, which is why he was on his skateboard in the first place. Self-blame piled onto self-blame. He suffered panic and anxiety attacks and crying jags.

Depressed, Wenger talked his issues out with friends. He had always kept a journal, but he started to write more regularly. He bought a used car to fix up as a way to feel he had some control over his life. He began to think that if he forgave himself, his various issues could be resolved. Eventually he wrote a pair of essays for his website, The Man Effect, which offers advice to men on confidence and similar topics. The first piece, which he published in July 2019, described his personal

ordeal; the second, which went up in early 2020, was a meditation on self-forgiveness. In it, Wenger discussed what he'd learned and encouraged readers to ask themselves questions such as, "What are some decisions or actions I took in the past that still bug me to this day? Do I have the desire to address these? Are there areas in my life where I feel denial, guilt and/or shame?" The articles, he says, were a turning point. "Honestly, when I hit publish, it was the closure of that learning process. I felt personal release."

A hallmark of self-forgiveness, unlike forgiveness, is that it can—and should—lead to personal growth. In a 2010 study published in the journal *Personality and Individual Differences*, researchers from Carleton University in Ontario, Canada, looked at procrastination through the eyes of some highly qualified experts: 119 college students preparing for midterm exams. While procrastination is self-defeating, not to mention bad for one's GPA, studies estimate that almost all students procrastinate at some point and half do so most of the time. The Carleton researchers wanted to know if self-forgiveness could help the students improve their self-regulation. It turned out it did. Students who reported they forgave themselves for procrastinating before studying for the first exam said they procrastinated less when it came to preparing for the next one.

On the flip side, as difficult as forgiveness can be, self-forgiveness can be challenging in a completely different way. The first step, says Worthington, is often the most difficult because it involves getting past self-condemnation. The blame might be comforting or familiar to you, or reinforce long

Forgiveness of others is often unconditional and can preserve relationships.

and wrongly held assumptions. You might expect yourself to be perfect and anything less equals failure. You might hold yourself to a standard you'd never expect from others. It's not just about forgiving an isolated event but accepting who you are, and that, Worthington adds, "doesn't come in a bolt of lightning at 4:30. It takes time and maturity to accept yourself fully."

So what's the difference between forgiveness and self-forgiveness? It can be understood largely in terms of motivation. Forgiveness is about wanting to get over the hurt of being wronged and wanting to heal; it tends to be unconditional. Self-forgiveness often has strings attached in the form of the expectation that you'll do better in the future, and to work, it has to be sincere. If not, you can't really expect any change in behavior to stick.

Crucial to the process is closing that "injustice gap," where the offender works purposefully to make amends and restore moral order. The basic rule is the smaller the injustice, the easier it is to step over it. Let's go back to the Chunky Monkey bender. In that case, the ideal behavior might have been simply not to eat the entire pint. The injustice gap was minor. You could fix things in your mind by eating healthfully and carefully in the following days, or by doing some extra sit-ups.

Infidelity, a violation of marriage vows, would be much more complicated. Putting aside disagreement on whether a cheater should confess, the unfaithful partner would first have to figure out what's going on in the marriage. What does the infidelity mean? Is the marriage in trouble? Only then does it become a question of "shifting from 'I'm horrible' to 'How can I repair harm and have it be less likely that it will happen again?' " says Julie Exline, a professor of the psychology of religion and spirituality at Case Western Reserve University.

Where does that leave us error-prone humans? No matter how big or small the wrong, what you want to do is re-establish the moral balance. You will need to make repairs, either to your own psyche or to the wronged party. You will have to decide to forgive yourself and experience emotional release. You'll work on self-acceptance and pledge not to let it happen again. It might take months or years, progress and setbacks, help from friends, professionals or the reams of literature now available on the topic.

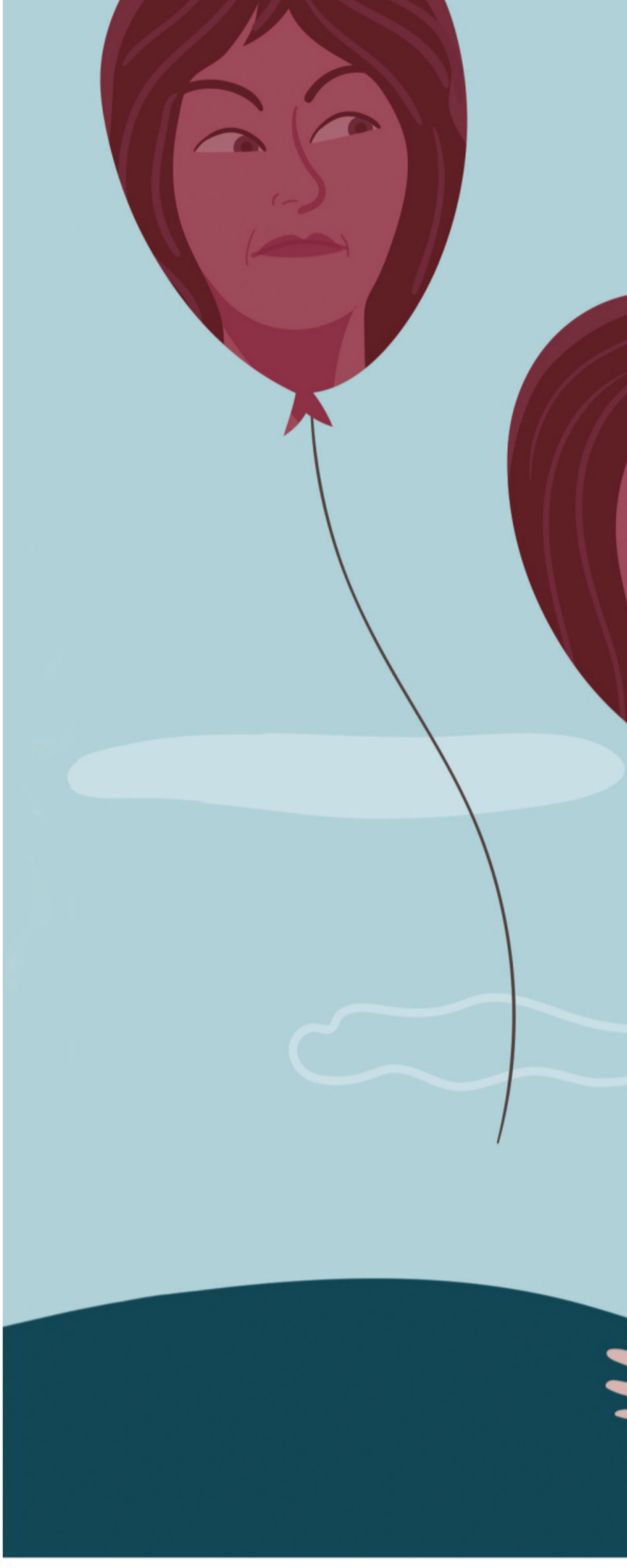
On the other hand, it might just take some perspective. That's the view of Amy Smotherman, a single mom in Nashville who remembers the guilt she felt working long hours in the restaurant business when her daughter was young. Though Smotherman insisted that all homework be completed by the time she got home from work, if it wasn't, she was usually too tired to make a fuss. Other boundaries also came and went as well, and Smotherman constantly kicked herself for it, convinced she was a terrible parent. Today, Smotherman's daughter is grown up, happy, self-supporting and in a long-term relationship. Smotherman has accepted she's the mom she was supposed to be. "I see that everything is fine now. My daughter's gone out on her own and she's great." □

You are the soul of forbearance with the prattling colleague in the next cubicle. You shine thousand-watt charm on the eye-rolling teen who bags your groceries. Then you arrive home. Your son has left the ketchup out. Again. Hellfire rains upon him.

IT IS A TRUTH universally acknowledged: we are often most impatient, angriest and least compassionate toward those we should be kindest to—our supposed loved ones. ("If you think you're enlightened, go spend a week with your family," wrote the late spiritual teacher Ram Dass.) Partners, parents, sibs, kids—all can receive an outsize portion of our ire. "We feel free to be ourselves around those we are closest to," says Joyce Marter, a Chicago-based psychotherapist with Refresh Mental Health. "But it's not good when we don't offer them basic kindness and respect." After all, snapping may be satisfying in the moment, but a pattern of it can corrode relationships. And it rarely achieves much. (When was the last time a blowout resulted in no more dishes left in the sink ever again?)

It's not just your imagination: a 2014 review in the journal *Current Directions in Psychological Science* found that those we are closest to are indeed the most common target of our "everyday aggression," such as yelling, heated confrontations and hurtful gossip. Why? For starters, "you have a lot more skin in the game," says Alexandra Solomon, a professor of psychology at Northwestern University in Evanston, Ill., and the author of *Loving Bravely*. Your life is so intertwined that their actions affect and thus irk you much more than those of a stranger. "At times we can feel victimized by partners, parents and kids and believe they are intentionally doing stuff to us, even if their motivations have nothing to do with us at all," she says. Another reason: we feel exposed. "They see all of us, including our worst. That can be scary. We take our vulnerability and turn it into pissiness," says Solomon.

We may also just stop trying when we're around them. A study in the *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* compared short interactions between long-term partners to how the same people acted with strangers. Subjects were far more positive and cheerful with the stranger and enjoyed the interactions more. That's because we rally to put our best face forward with those we don't know. We don't waste that charm on our loved ones.



Treat Your Family Like Strangers

It's all too easy to have a short fuse with the ones we love. Time to disarm

BY JENNIFER KING LINDLEY

Families are complicated. Sometimes anger is justified. But in many cases, crotchetiness has just become a reflex. "Our behavior with family members is some of the most habitual, and some of these habits may cause problems. And with practice, you can make compassion a habit too," says Helen Weng, an assistant professor of psychiatry at the Osher Center for Integrative Medicine at the University of California, San Francisco. Learning to pause and react with more kindness in the following common flash points can be a first step in bringing your best self to your closest relationships. When you do, says John Kim, a licensed therapist and the founder of TheAngryTherapist.com, "you are not giving the other person a freebie or a gift. Practicing compassion helps you grow."

Your spouse forgot to pick up the dry cleaning. He had one job!

This, of course, is not about your missing dress. You see the omission as a symbol for all the times you've done way more than your share. His mother clearly waited on him hand and foot! So you may feel like letting it rip. "Anger is an entitled emotion. It says to us, 'This situation has to be dealt with right now,'" says Solomon. But it's much more productive to wait until you have calmed down to respond. (A quick reboot: take a deep breath, then exhale to the count of six. Repeat until steam stops wafting from your ears.) Taking time to decompress activates the prefrontal cortex, the thinking part of your brain, so you can react more effectively.

Then try zooming out and thinking about the incident by adopting the perspective of a neutral third party who wants the best for you both, Solomon advises. Think, "When he forgets, she feels like she is alone with no one to help. He loves her but was totally distracted by a work crisis." Adopting this viewpoint helps you stop seeing the other person as the warring camp. A kinder, more constructive conversation that may actually lead to change becomes possible.

Your dad keeps giving you unsolicited career advice. He clearly thinks you are an idiot or a baby

Though you are old enough to have kids of your own, you still crave your parents' approval and bristle at their judgment. So even well-intentioned comments may trigger you, says Barbara Greenberg, a clinical psychologist in Fairfield County, Conn. Yes, you may itch to blast Dad a nasty reply after he forwards you yet another LinkedIn contact. Instead, ask yourself, "Can I think of a more generous interpretation of his actions? He loves me and is trying his best to be helpful."

"Assuming the best intentions in others, including your family members, can save you a lot of anxiety," says Greenberg. That doesn't mean you have to accept his help if you don't want it. Redirect his urge by asking for his advice in a more benign arena, she suggests: "Why do you think my car is making that weird sound?" This mental switch is easiest when you're practicing good self-care, says Amie Gordon, a social psychologist at the University of California, San Francisco. "If you are hungry, tired or stressed, you may be more likely to interpret other people's actions negatively. You are vigilant for threats." This is especially true if you see your loved one mostly on lightning-rod occasions, like at wine-soaked holiday meals. Escape for a walk as needed.

Your teen must have gotten that piercing just to tick you off!

"Our kids mirror back to us who we were at that age, so our own issues from the past get kicked up," says Solomon. "You might think, 'I was never allowed to do that!' or 'OMG, she is going down the same road I did!' " Before you start barking, realize there's the situation—then there's the story you are telling yourself about it. It is the story that's likely inflaming you. "In your mind, she is next going to get full sleeve tattoos, she will never be able to get a job, and you will only see her during visiting hours on Sundays," says Marter.

To cool down and react with more kindness, try some cognitive reframing. Assess what the facts of the immediate situation are, right here, right now. "She got one piercing. That is normal: teenagers are breaking away and becoming their own person, experimenting with self-expression." Changing your thoughts can change your emotions. Try discussing her choice with real curiosity: "I'm interested why you did that." And remember how hard it was to be a teen—she may have done it to look cool to her judgy peers. Says Marter: "Empathy is the magic wand in relationships. Feeling understood defuses conflict of all kinds."

Your elderly mother-in-law just asked you for the eighth time what you're making for dinner. It. Is. Not. Even. Noon. Yet.

First, remember that she is not doing this just to make you feel trapped in a bad remake of *Groundhog Day*. "It is extremely trying to have someone ask you the same question over and over. That's a very common behavior in dementia. Understand she is doing so because she has no memory of asking you the first time," says Jo McCord, a family consultant at the Family Caregiver Alliance at the National Center on Caregiving. Your frustration can also spring from your own feelings of grief: "It can be very painful to see someone you used to have conversations with so diminished. This can make your own reaction more intense," says McCord.

If you're losing it, retreat to that impregnable sanctuary, the bathroom, for a few minutes to regroup, she suggests (just make sure your relative is safe and knows you're stepping away for a moment). Other techniques: "If she can still read, you can write the menu or the doctor's appointment time on a whiteboard and point to it when she asks. Or distract her to get her off her train of thought: 'Let's have some nice tea!' "

If you're feeling guilty about not being more like Mother Teresa in this tough situation, start by showing yourself some kindness. "Practice self-compassion first," says Susan Piver, a Buddhist teacher and the author of *The Four Noble Truths of Love*. "Talk to yourself as you would a friend. It can be as simple as saying to yourself out loud when you are feeling overwhelmed, 'I am with you.' When you soften to yourself in that way, you naturally soften to others."

Your adult sister takes forever to return texts and rarely initiates her own. You are crazy busy too, yet you make time to reach out

"With siblings, we regress. We become 12 years old again and feel the same conflicts. You may remember feeling unseen or being in her shadow," says Greenberg. Resist shooting her a string of frown emojis. "You maybe have a vision of how you think a sister should act," says Kim (like the idea that a good big sister should be your closest confidant). "Try to take that label off the relationship. Being more compassionate is about appreciating people for who they actually are." She may not crave the same level of day-to-day closeness, but she was the first one there for your last true emergency.

"It helps me to think of people as unique species," says Kim. "Some of us are giraffes. Some of us are lions. You can't expect a giraffe to act like a lion." To take some pressure off of the situation so that you feel kinder, think about how you can get your needs met somewhere else, suggests Weng. If you hoped for a sister who could always be a shoulder to lean on, for example, can you find that support in a close friend? It's a double win: you get the support you're craving and your sister gets off the hook.

Even in imperfect relationships (and aren't they all?), there is still room for gratitude, says clinical psychologist Lisa Firestone, a senior editor at *PsychAlive*. "In looking for slights and failings, we often forget to scan our loved ones for what they are doing right or tell them what we do appreciate about them," she says. Doing so is a powerful way to boost compassion. So think about a wonderful memory you have had with your sister—then go ahead and text her some heart-eye emojis. ◻

Hugging is one form of compassion that can boost overall happiness.

The (Real!) Secret *to* Happiness

It's not money—or even less stress or more time. Research shows that a little compassion can go a long way toward making you feel better about yourself and the world around you. Here's how to unleash the power of kindness

BY CAMILLE NOE PAGÁN

You're close to finishing a huge project when a colleague who's working on the last bit of information confesses that she's swamped and hasn't had a chance to get to it. Sure, you could snap at her or make a passive-aggressive comment. Or you could show some compassion and offer to help her out, improving her day and your own in the process.

You've surely heard about the perks of optimism and gratitude. Think of compassion—the feeling of concern and sympathy for another's misfortune—as their equally talented but less-hyped sister. "It's the key to happiness and well-being," says Thupten Jinpa, a former Buddhist monk who helped develop a landmark course in compassion training at Stanford School of Medicine. Indeed, a growing body of research shows that compassion reduces anxiety, depression and stress and may also boost immunity—along with longevity.

We're born with the instinct to be nice: even babies and toddlers have the capacity for kindness. A study in the journal *PLOS One* found that kids under the age of 2 were happier when they gave treats to another person than when they received treats themselves. "Helping others makes you feel better about yourself and the world around you," says Stefanie Ziev, a life coach in New York City who encourages her clients to spread goodwill.

Compassion actually gives you a physical high. Donating money to help others lights up the brain's pleasure centers—which are typically activated by things like food and sex—according to a study in the journal *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*. Some experts believe that there's an evolutionary explanation: by lending a hand, we up the odds that our species will survive, so our bodies prime us for the behavior by making helping feel good. Yet more payoff: people who assist others report being less strapped for time later, discovered experts at the University of Pennsylvania's Wharton School of Business. The researchers speculate that helping out makes people feel more effective, which may cause them to feel less rushed and stressed.

Simply witnessing an act of compassion triggers feelings of awe, admiration, warmth and love, according to a study in the *Journal of Positive Psychology* (which may be why you compulsively click on stories about people who donate a kidney to a stranger). At the same time, it increases your desire to be more charitable yourself. Compassion also

3 Ways to Show Yourself the Love

Don't forget to be nice to you. "About 80% of people are more compassionate to others than they are to themselves," says Kristin Neff, an associate professor of human development and culture at the University of Texas at Austin, who's considered to be a pioneer in research on self-compassion. "There's a misconception that self-compassion is selfish, but just the opposite is true. Being kind to yourself puts you in a happier, more pleasant mindset, and that allows you to have better relationships with others."

1

CHECK THAT DOWNER VOICE IN YOUR HEAD

Instead of the punitive "OMG, I'm late again because my life is such a mess," try "I deserve props for getting my family out the door every morning." Notes Neff, "I tell my students to talk to themselves the way they would talk to a friend."

2

ADMIT WHEN THINGS STINK

"Say you're trying to lose weight and can't, but a good friend is having no trouble shedding pounds," says Jean Fain, a psychotherapist and instructor at Harvard Medical School. "Rather than sugarcoating the situation, acknowledge that it's painful, it's part of life, and it will pass. Being honest about your feelings invites you to be kinder to yourself."

3

PUT YOUR HAND ON YOUR HEART

No, really. "People respond deeply to touch, even from themselves," says Neff. "This can send a soothing message from your body to your mind and put you in a compassionate state."

curbs the natural (and anxiety-provoking) tendency to navel-gaze. "When you're responding to someone else's needs, your focus is off yourself," explains Jinpa, the author of *A Fearless Heart*. That can quiet self-critical thought patterns ("Am I good enough to my husband?" "Do I look old for my age?"), helping you function and feel better overall.

THE COMPASSION CURE

If compassion is so darn satisfying, why don't we all practice it more often? Blame your stress level, for one. Pressing emotions like worry and doubt can crowd out compassion. "With life being as hectic and full as it is, it's all too easy to fall into the mindset that you don't have time to go out of your way for anyone else," says Ziev. "Yet compassion isn't necessarily something big or dramatic, the way people often assume. In many cases, it's little actions or thoughts." It can be as simple as saying, "I've been there" to a frazzled mom whose kid is having a meltdown in the checkout line.

As with many things in life, the more you practice compassion, the easier and more natural it becomes.

Fear can also put a damper on compassion. Logically, you know that misfortune isn't contagious, but it's normal to harbor subconscious superstitions that another person's sadness will infect your outlook. Say a neighbor wants to come over to vent about her divorce; you may worry, deep down, that her failed marriage will reveal cracks in your own. Or that if you're too indulgent, she'll take advantage of your empathy, and before you know it you'll be picking up her dry cleaning. The best thing you can do in these situations is check yourself, says Jinpa. Chances are, nothing bad happened the last time you helped another person. And remember: you are always in control of your own boundaries.

As with many things in life, the more you practice compassion, the easier and more natural it becomes. Here are a few proven ways to reap the benefits of this powerful emotion.

Spread the Light!

You don't have to give away your worldly possessions or donate an organ to express compassion. Try these super-simple but oh-so-meaningful ideas from Brenda Knight, the author of *Be a Good in the World.*

Put down your phone and make actual eye contact.

Catch a co-worker doing something amazing and acknowledge it.

Bring a sick pal some soup or sushi, or whatever she's craving.

Give a compliment—and mean it.

Let the Chatty Cathy in your life talk your ear off for a few extra minutes.

Take out the trash for an elderly neighbor.

Don't wait for birthdays and other special occasions to say those three little words; take a tip from Stevie Wonder and call someone just to tell her you love her.

SET A DAILY INTENTION

For example, write "I intend to bring joy to the lives of those around me today" on a Post-it and stick it on the back of your smartphone. This can set the tone for your day and may change the outcomes of your interactions. "People tend to reflect the emotions others are projecting," says Ziev. "If you're showing kindness, you're likely to get it back too."

BE MINDFUL

The ability to focus on the present promotes compassion by instilling a sense of calm. Instead of immediately reacting when things go wrong or spin out of control, pause to think—then act in a compassionate and self-aware way. To cultivate more mindfulness in daily life, "take a few minutes to meditate while sitting in a chair or walking around the neighborhood," advises Jean Fain, a psychotherapist and instructor at Harvard Medical School and the author of *The Self-Compassion Diet*. "Start by wishing good for yourself. Repeat a phrase such as 'May I be safe, may I be happy, may I live with ease' 5 to 10 times. Then wish the same for your friends and family."

MOVE MORE

Repetitive exercise, like running, also encourages mindfulness. In fact, aerobic exercise is more effective at cultivating mindfulness than relaxation training, found a 2014 study in *Mental Health and Physical Activity*. Researchers suspect this is because physical activity activates brain regions that control attention.

USE YOUR (POSITIVE) IMAGINATION

It's human nature to insta-judge others. But that guy who cut you off in traffic? He could be rushing home to his sick wife. And the friend of a friend who made a snide remark about your outfit? It's entirely possible she suffers from social anxiety and was trying (unsuccessfully) to be funny. "Compassion requires you to give people the benefit of the doubt," says Jinpa. That doesn't mean you should become a doormat, but do your best to let unkind actions flow past you. And if you screw up and respond to someone in a way you regret, give yourself the benefit of the doubt—you'll do better next time. After all, you deserve to get as much compassion as you give. ☐

ILLUSTRATION BY LAN TRUONG FOR TIME

Couples who engage in good deeds have been shown to have stronger relationships.

Random Acts *of* Kindness Make Marriages Happier

Married couples share a sort of joint account of good deeds. Making regular deposits can help keep you together

BY AMANDA MACMILLAN

doing something nice for your spouse can boost your emotional well-being, even if the good deed is a secret and he or she isn't aware you've done it.

Research published in the journal *Emotion* provides scientific evidence that it really is better to give than to receive, say the authors. They also say it supports the hypothesis put forth by the Dalai Lama that "compassionate concern for others' welfare enhances one's own affective state."

To test the Dalai Lama's theory, psychologists studied 175 newlywed spouses who had been married for an average of seven months. For two weeks, subjects were asked to record instances of when either one put aside personal wishes to meet the other's needs. They also recorded their own daily emotional states.

On average, the participants reported giving 0.65 compassionate acts a day, and receiving 0.59 such acts. These acts included things like changing personal plans for their partner's sake, expressing tenderness or gratitude or simply doing something thoughtful, like cleaning snow off a spouse's car.

The researchers assumed that, collectively, the couples would reap the most benefits when acts of kindness were recognized and acknowledged—and that hypothesis proved true. But they also found that givers reported emotional boosts even when their actions weren't consciously noticed. In these cases, emotional benefits for the giver were about 45% greater than the benefits for the recipient.

This surprised the researchers. "You could argue that being compassionate and not having it noticed would not be good at all," says Harry Reis, a professor of psychology at the University of Rochester. "If I go out of my way to do something nice and my spouse doesn't acknowledge it, my reaction could certainly be, 'Well thanks a whole hell of a lot.' "

That may still be the case for some people, says Reis, especially those who feel their relationships are constantly one-sided. The authors also point out that their study participants may still be in the "honeymoon phase" of their marriages and that their findings may not apply to couples who have been together for a lot longer. But the notion that people can derive fulfillment from selfless acts does make sense from an evolutionary perspective, says Reis. "Humans are wired to give," he explains. "We are a cooperative species, and there are mechanisms in us that promote social behavior."

Reis is also studying the emotional benefits of spending money on others. So far, he says, his studies have reached similar conclusions: spending on others can bring donors happiness, he says, but only when the goal is to benefit the people the money is spent on—not to impress them.

Overall, Reis says, his research shows that giving to others or doing nice things for them because you expect your behavior to be reciprocated is not the key to happiness. "It's giving to others for the sake of giving to others that's important," he says. "As soon as you couch it with, 'I'm going to be compassionate today because I expect you to be compassionate tomorrow,' it destroys the effect." □

Electronic communication can come off as rude, since it typically lacks facial and tonal cues.

Spreading Kindness *in a* Rude World

PTA meetings are not peaceful. Politicians are not polite. And yikes, the Facebook comments section. If we try a little harder to meet all this rudeness with grace, we might just improve our society—or at least keep our blood pressure in check

BY JENNIFER KING LINDLEY

A lot of people these days—and no, they aren't all your grandmother—are bemoaning the death of civility. We witness shoving in crowded elevators, snarky comments online, yelling obscenities in traffic, and it does seem like the civilized world is going to pieces. But whether or not the perception is true—after all, nitwits in your grandparents' generation cut in line too—it wasn't broadcast the same way, via Twitter, Facebook and cable news. The result: we are feeling the strain.

A January 2017 poll by the communications firm Weber Shandwick found that 69% of respondents said they thought the U.S. had a major civility problem. "We are in an age of rudeness," says Lisa Mirza Grotts, an etiquette expert in San Francisco. "And it seems to be getting worse." You can blame technology, of course. We sometimes focus more on our phones and TVs than on the faces and feelings of actual people. You can also blame long work hours. "Sixty percent of employees say they act uncivilly because they are overworked and stressed and don't have time to be nice," says Christine Porath, a professor of management at Georgetown University and the author of *Mastering Civility: A Manifesto for the Workplace*.

What you might not realize is that all this rudeness takes a toxic toll. A 2017 study in the *Journal of Organizational Behavior* found that employees suffered from stomach problems, sleeplessness and headaches days after being dissed on the job. Other research has shown that experiencing or even witnessing rudeness can hurt our creativity and our working memory.

"Often rudeness is ambiguous, so we use up a lot of cognitive resources trying to figure it out," says Trevor Foulk, an assistant professor of organizational behavior at the University of Maryland in College Park. (Did my roommate leave those dirty dishes in the sink because she's inconsiderate or because she had to rush off?)

What can we do about it, since smartphones, television, the internet and, well, human beings are here to stay? Be nice. Let things go as much as you can. And follow this expert advice on handling rudeness in your everyday life.

WHEN IT'S A STRANGER

WHAT YOU WANT TO DO: Give that subway shover or loud-phone-talker a piece of your mind—though you'll probably never see her again. Why? "Even a

When a co-worker is rude, release the frustration before it festers.

small act can tap into a well of deep feelings. It may bring up all the other times you felt disrespected in some way" and may make your blood boil, says Joyce Marter, a therapist and the founder of Urban Balance, a counseling practice in Chicago.

WHAT YOU SHOULD DO: Speaking up may only increase tension. Instead, take a deep breath and resist the urge to engage. Most important, remember that the offensive behavior has nothing to do with you. The person could just be having a bad day; she's not intentionally trying to irritate you. Second, "it's not your job to teach the world manners," says Grotts. "And if the person is truly unpleasant, he won't learn from anything you say anyway." When you fume because the last treadmill user left sweat all over the handles, you experience a cascade of stress hormones that can, in time, wreak havoc on your health. You can calm this automatic response by practicing a mantra, says Jennifer Riggs, a neuroscience coach in Boston who works with professional women. Try, "It's not about me," and repeat it silently until you cool down. Think about a happy place, like the beach, or something that makes you feel good. The aim is to eventually create new habits or thinking patterns in response to these kinds of slights.

THE EXCEPTION: It is appropriate to confront the person when remaining silent would cause you ongoing distress. Example: The plane passenger next to you has her music turned *waaaaaay* up, and you can hear it even though she's wearing headphones. "There are tiny acts of social thuggery," says Amy Alkon, the author of *Good Manners for Nice People Who Sometimes Say F*CK*. "Something is being taken from you—your time, your peace, your space." You will likely be flustered in the moment, so Alkon advises thinking out how you'll react to these aggravations in advance. Address the person with the respect and empathy you wish she were showing you.

"It's called emotional matching. We mirror the other person's tone," says Ryan Martin, a professor of psychology at the University of Wisconsin–Green Bay. "Instead of getting into a screaming match, the person is more likely to respond in a reasonable way." So open by giving the offender the benefit of the doubt: "You may not realize that your music is loud enough for the rest of us to hear. It doesn't help that we're in such tight quarters! Would you mind lowering the volume a bit?" If the person is simply clueless, she will probably apologize, says Alkon. If she's a jerk, your saintly reaction should at least cause her some satisfying chagrin.

WHEN IT'S A CO-WORKER

WHAT YOU WANT TO DO: Vent to other co-workers, vent to your friends, vent to your roommates . . . or maybe you just mutter under your breath about the guy in marketing who always leaves the coffee pot empty. Either way, it's dangerous to let your irritation fester and grow. You may spend as much time with co-workers as you do with your family. "And rudeness is contagious. If you do nothing to protect yourself at work, you may go home and start fighting with your spouse or kids," says Riggs.

WHAT YOU SHOULD DO: Avoid the meanies! Take another route to the conference room if you have to pass someone who always has a sarcastic, biting comment. "We remember negative encounters much more intensely than we do positive ones," says Catherine Mattice Zundel, a founder of the consulting group Civility Partners. To help change the office vibe, initiate a charm offensive. If rudeness is contagious, so is courtesy, says Porath. Research from the Gottman Institute discovered that couples who stay together and have happier marriages make five positive comments for every negative one. That can apply to work relationships too. Some organizations have instituted a 10–5 guideline to help create a more cordial vibe: if you are within 10 feet of someone, make eye contact and smile. If you are within five feet, greet them with a hello. (Sound hokey? Research found that worker satisfaction jumped measurably.) You can also create a happier atmosphere by showing those around you that you are interested in them and present," says Porath. Then people will be more considerate to you.

THE EXCEPTION: When the rude person is someone you can't avoid (your boss, your partner on a long-term project) and it's a pattern of disrespect, not an occasional gaffe you can ignore, you may need to speak up. Zundel recommends this three-part conversation: (1) State the problem. "Jamie, when you were talking to me yesterday about the mistakes I'd made on that report, you were yelling at me." (2) State the consequences of the person's actions. "When you do that, it makes it hard for me to learn how to fix the mistakes so I can avoid them next time." (3) Offer a solution. "I am really interested in learning how to improve, so in the future it would be helpful if you could talk with me about my mistakes and coach me through them instead of raising your voice." This respectful, constructive tone works with bosses too, Zundel says. And if you're the boss and an employee is the offender? Focus on what you do want, not on the behavior that's driving you nuts. Says Zundel: "When you want someone to stop being late, you want the employee to be on time. Say that in your conversation rather than the negative."

WHEN IT'S ONLINE (OR VIA TEXT)

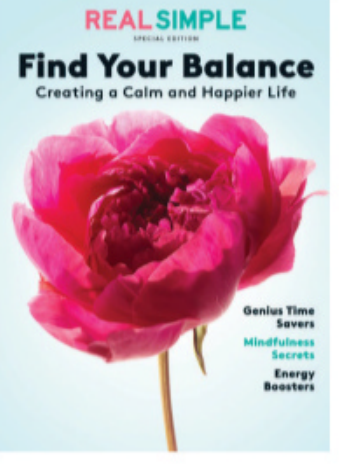
WHAT YOU WANT TO DO: Assume the worst and fight back. Communicating electronically leaves us without the cues of facial expressions and tone of voice to provide context. So we overreact and stew or fire off an angry email, text or comment in return. Even worse: the detachment of the internet makes bad behavior seem consequence-free. Friends say more hurtful things on Facebook than in person; you're more likely to rant about shoddy customer service in a post than say something to a salesperson's face.

WHAT YOU SHOULD DO: Maybe, just maybe, don't check your phone first thing in the morning. Reading Twitter skirmishes and comment brawls before work will make you extra alert to rudeness around you all day, a phenomenon known as priming. "Our brains have evolved so that if we see one bad thing, we know the likelihood of other bad things is high. If you see one wolf, you must be in wolf territory," says Foulk. When you get to the office, your rudeness radar will be on high alert. So when someone says something open to your interpretation ("Nice shoes"), you'll bristle. And, again, try to give people the benefit of the doubt and let things

Remind yourself that it's easy to take emails and texts the wrong way when you lack tone of voice as a cue. (Emojis don't make up for it. Sorry.)

go. "Venting online feels good in the moment but is more likely to make you feel worse afterward," says Martin. In one of his studies, published in *Cyberpsychology, Behavior, and Social Networking*, college students who had been asked to write such tirades reported being in worse moods after doing so. If you get into the habit of dealing with anger in this unhealthy way, ranting can become your go-to method in real life, says Martin. Remind yourself that it's easy to take emails and texts the wrong way when you lack tone of voice as a cue. (Emojis don't make up for it. Sorry.) "You may be interpreting ambiguous messages as rude when they aren't meant that way," says Martin. So stop and think before you fire back a response, and try to respond as if the sender's underlying motive was the most gentle, benign one possible, which it absolutely may have been.

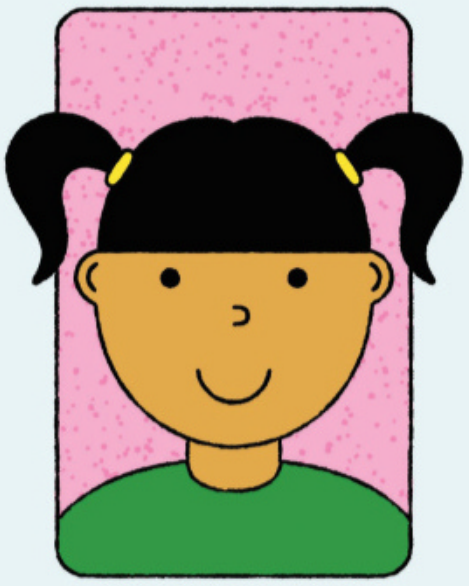
THE EXCEPTION: If you feel you simply can't manage to reply without your own sarcasm or without digging a deeper hole, then at least write back and ask for clarification in a restrained, polite way first: "It seems like you might be upset that I already made a reservation. Are you? I just want to see everyone and have fun. Happy for you to pick the place." If possible, have a face-to-face conversation. Stroll over to the sender's cubicle for a check-in or—gasp—call a friend and actually talk. ◻



Excerpted from Real Simple: Find Your Balance, *a special edition available on Amazon.com.*

Raising Polite Kids

Teaching them kindness can be challenging, but these age-appropriate tips can help



LITTLE KIDS

CLASSIC MOVE:
Calling his playgroup buddy a "toilethead."

UGH, WHY?
"Two to 4 is the teenagerhood of childhood. They are starting to separate from parents and explore their power," says Joyce Marter, a therapist in Chicago. Rude language can be particularly enticing at this age too, says parent coach Nicole Schwarz, founder of Imperfectfamilies.com. It's not malicious; it's just exciting to get a reaction.

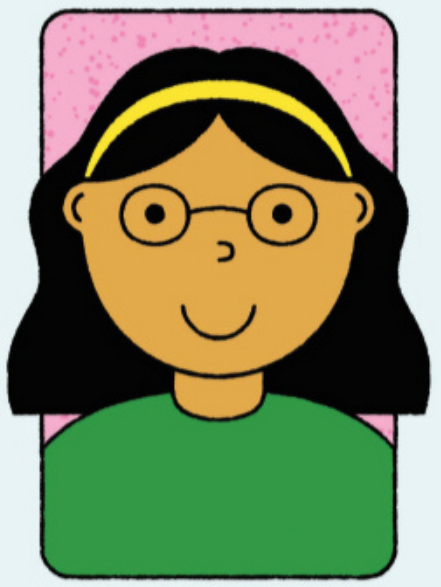
THE FIX:
This is a great opportunity to teach empathy. "Ask, 'What did your friend's face look like after you said that? What could you say to help him feel better?' " The goal is to start teaching how other people are affected by what he does and says—for good and bad," says Schwarz.

SCHOOL-AGE KIDS

CLASSIC MOVE:
Dumping lacrosse gear at the door, waiting for his valet (you) to put it away.

UGH, WHY?
Even the most well-intentioned parents let their family lives revolve around the needs of their kids. "Parents think they have to provide constant attention and enrichment for kids to be competitive, and they feel guilty asking them to do anything," says Darlene Sweetland, a co-author of *Teaching Kids to Think.*

THE FIX:
It's simple—kids need to pitch in around the house, says Sweetland. "Don't present it as a favor or a chore; it is what families do for each other," she says. Otherwise, kids lose out on learning how to anticipate others' needs—which is more important to their future than another round of fencing lessons.



TEENAGERS

CLASSIC MOVES:
Slamming bedroom doors in your face; grunting in response when you ask about school.

UGH, WHY?
"It's not easy to be a teenager. They are changing cognitively, emotionally, physically," says Barbara Greenberg, a clinical psychologist and the author of *Teenage as a Second Language*. "They want space but don't know how to ask for it."

THE FIX:
Don't chase or yell or engage in any other way that will only exacerbate the tension. Instead, validate her emotions: "It seems like you're upset. When you're ready to talk, I'll be around." Later (after a cooling-off period), offer an example of a less-rude way to communicate: "Mom, I need a few minutes. It's been a rough day." Says Greenberg: "Teens appreciate that. They don't like feeling out of control either."

ILLUSTRATIONS BY LAN TRUONG FOR TIME

You Feel Me?

If so, you probably have a healthy dose of empathy. It's a powerful—and increasingly appreciated—character trait. It stops bullying! Builds bridges! Helps kids get into college! And the best news: you can cultivate more. Here's how

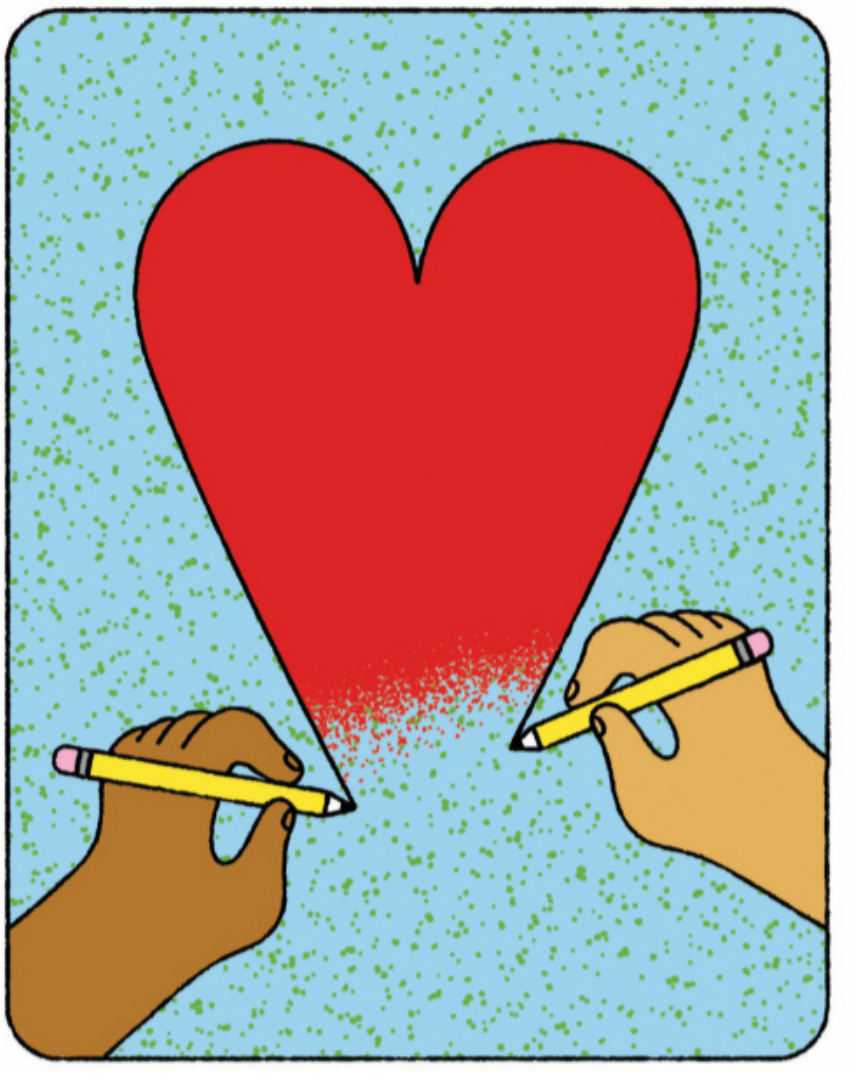
BY YELENA MOROZ ALPERT

LET'S START WITH A POP QUIZ

Do you know the difference between empathy and sympathy? "Sympathy is feeling *for* someone. Empathy is feeling *with* someone," says Michele Borba, an educational psychologist and the author of *UnSelfie: Why Empathetic Kids Succeed in Our All-About-Me World*. Another way to think of it: sympathy is observing a painting in a gallery; empathy is being in the painting. It is entering into another's reality, whether that is someone's pain or simply a different way of life, and valuing that person's feelings.

For example, you see a new co-worker fidgeting during the weekly meeting. You notice that she looks nervous; empathy helps you relate to the fact that we're all a little unsure of ourselves in the first week at the office. So, you then act: you invite her to grab lunch to make her feel more at ease. Research shows that practicing empathy boosts your own happiness and self-esteem. And empathetic kids are less likely to bully or discriminate against people who are not like them.

Also, according to a 2014 study by the Momentous Institute, a Dallas-based organization that provides therapeutic and educational services to kids, higher empathy in elementary-age kids correlates with higher reading and math scores. "Parents sometimes think that empathy is locked up in genetics or happens by chance. They don't realize it's something they can work on," says Borba. We are all born with a capacity for empathy. So how do you maximize that capacity in your kids—setting them up to be empaths for life? Follow this advice.



How to Create an Empathy-Building Environment

Raising empathetic children when you don't practice empathy is virtually impossible. "You don't teach children empathy by telling them about it," says Roman Krznaric, the author of *Empathy: Why It Matters and How to Get It*.

1. PRIORITIZE FACE TIME

Emotional literacy, or correctly interpreting facial expressions, is vital in developing empathy. It's harnessed through continuous exposure to face-to-face interactions,

which are then memorized. "Face-to-face encounters are where we learn to put body language, eye contact and voice tone together," says Sherry Turkle, a professor of social studies of science and technology at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and the author of *Reclaiming Conversation: The Power of Talk in a Digital Age*. You know where this is headed: every time you talk to your child without looking up from a screen, not only are you missing opportunities to read her face and understand what she is feeling but your child is also missing an opportunity to do the same with you. So curb your impulse to multitask between the digital and real worlds. The real world, after all, is where your children live.

2. FOLLOW THE PLATINUM RULE

It's this: Do unto others as they would have you do unto them. In other words, think about how that person would want you to treat him, not how you would like to be treated. It's a less self-referential approach than the golden rule—doing unto others as you would have them do unto you—and it works. This rule applies beautifully during playdates. Before your son's friends come over, have him brainstorm how the guests might want to play. If he reaches for his favorite caboose, say, "I know you love trains, but does James? Last time he really enjoyed blocks."

3. WATCH YOUR WORDS

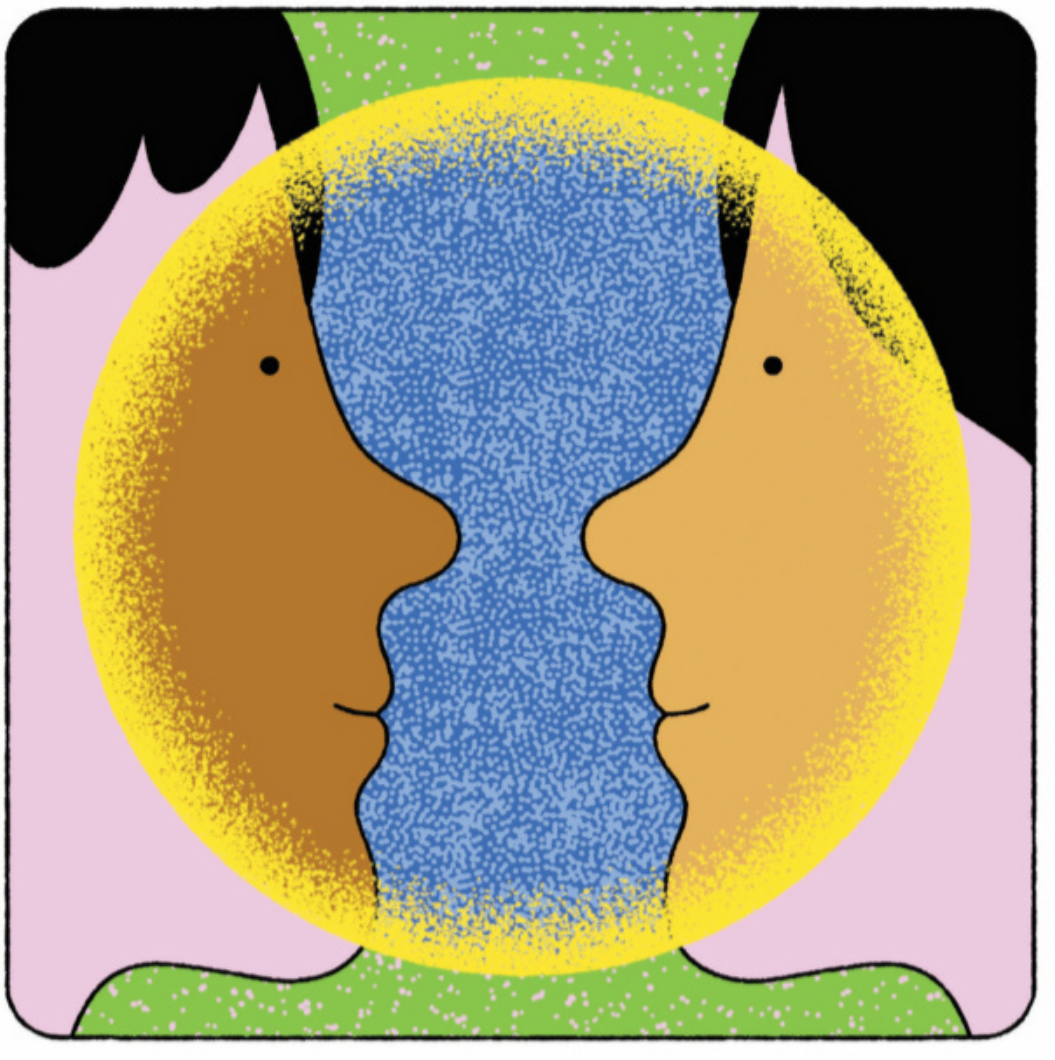
Specifically, when it comes to conversations about school. Always asking about assignments can send the signal that success trumps consideration for others. "Maybe your language needs tweaking to include praise for character and compassion and not just performance," says Borba. When your child has a conflict, "don't rush to provide a solution," says Mary Gordon, the founder of Roots of Empathy, a Toronto-based nonprofit organization that works in schools. "Rush to build a connection." That in turn can help your child develop skills. When your daughter says, "Emma made fun of Sarah's shirt, and I laughed too," you can reply, "I'm glad you told me. Do you think that was right? How do you think Sarah felt? How can you make her feel better?" The goal is to pause rather than criticize—and give the child the chance to recognize her feelings.

4. LET THEM PRACTICE ON YOU

"We parents are often hesitant to reveal our fears or lack of confidence because we may not want our children to think that we are weak," says Borba. Sharing vulnerabilities and frustrations opens up an opportunity for your kids to practice empathy on you, making it that much easier for them to apply it to situations with people outside the family. Saying, "I had a hard day at work. I messed up my presentation," demonstrates what humiliation might look like. It's also a chance for your child to reply with "I feel the same way when I'm called on during class," reinforcing those empathetic neural pathways.

5. EXPAND YOUR CIRCLE

"We typically have empathy for people similar to us," says Richard Weissbourd, a faculty co-director of human development and psychology at the Harvard Graduate School of Education. Look for opportunities to build community with people in your kids' school or church who come from a different background than yours. Or, at least, says Weissbourd, "make a point to introduce them to people not on their radar: the crossing guard, doughnut-store manager or mailman. Make these people real and visible." Your job as a parent is to show appreciation so that your children see people as human beings who have feelings, instead of figures who move the process along. "Get them in the habit of saying 'Thank you,'" says Weissbourd. And practice what you preach: the next time you're tempted to snap at a waitress because your food is taking forever, resist the impulse. Ask considerately, if at all.



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Practical Tips for Every Age

INFANTS AND TODDLERS

Around age 3, the empathy that children are born with starts to become tainted by cultural and environmental factors. Toddlers begin to be more selective about whom to help, and they perceive those different from themselves as, well, different. Identifying with others and having compassion needs to be reinforced early on.

INVOLVE CHARACTERS

A 2016 study published in the *Journal of Children and Media* showed that preschoolers who actively watched *Daniel Tiger's Neighborhood* on PBS Kids showed higher levels of empathy than did those who watched a nature program. Why? "Kids may learn better from TV characters that are relatable and attractive and who talk directly to them, like real friends," says Eric Rasmussen, the author of the study and an associate professor in the College of Media and Communication at Texas Tech University in Lubbock.

SAVE IT FOR LATER

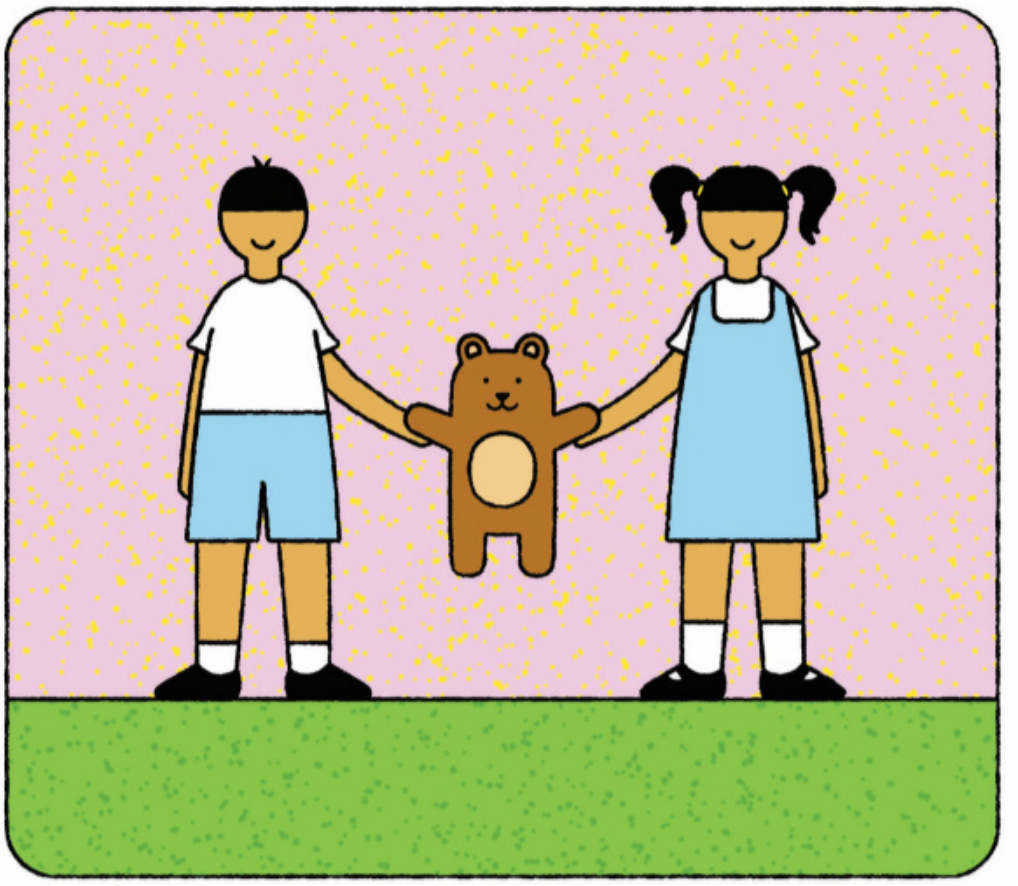
"Children this age don't learn deep messages in the moment but in the review," says Gordon. If there's a kerfuffle in which your child makes another kid sad, wait until you're in the car to reflect calmly. "Why did the friend feel that way?" "How would you feel?"

ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

Children at this age are learning the language of empathy, but they are not yet fluent. While they can recognize that two people can feel different in the same situation, they are more comfortable around those who are like them. That's one reason that bullying starts to pick up at this age.

BRING BACK PLAYTIME

As children move into elementary school, parents start to put more emphasis on learning instead of play. "Without unstructured playtime—at least some time every day—kids are missing opportunities to learn about social cues and negotiations," says Doris Bergen, a distinguished professor of educational psychology emerita at Miami University in Oxford, Ohio. Simple, unstructured play is an effective way to build empathy. In addition, games contribute to moral development as well as to many cognitive skills—they're essentially dress rehearsals for the real world.



STOP "*ING*-ING"

You know, solv*ing*, rescu*ing*, helicopter parent*ing*. It's important in raising self-sufficient, confident kids, but it's also crucial in raising empathetic ones. When you intervene, you send the vibe that kids need help. If they lack adequate coping skills, seeing other people's pain can add to their own distress and shut down empathy completely.

TWEENS AND TEENS

Get ready to see an empathy slump when kids enter middle school. "Fitting in with a group is key, and as they enter the teen years, the culture of peer pressure is more likely to activate parts of the brain that take risks than those that do the right thing," says Borba. The empathy channel is most open when children feel OK with who they are.

LIMIT SOCIAL MEDIA (HA-HA)

As if you haven't heard it before: spending too much time on Instagram and Snapchat shifts the focus to superficial things and amplifies self-absorption. "Empathy is always *we*, not *me*," says Borba. "It's hard to feel with someone when you want to be better than they are."

LOOK FOR FLASH MOMENTS

"Those are the moments of insight—where you realize that you're totally wrong about your assumptions—that shift you to a new empathic level," says Krznaric. Those moments could come on a sports field or during a school project, but you can also make those moments happen. They can be small. Your teens don't have to build houses in Haiti to get a new perspective; visiting another part of town or talking to classmates with whom they don't normally socialize can be eye-opening. ◻

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How to Be Kind
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"The best way to find yourself is to lose yourself in the service of others."

MAHATMA GANDHI

"In order to achieve effective change and create a new canvas of optimism, empathy must lead the charge."

MORGAN FREEMAN

"A single act of kindness throws out roots in all directions, and the roots spring up and make new trees."

AMELIA EARHART

"I've learned that people will forget what you said, people will forget what you did, but people will never forget how you made them feel."

MAYA ANGELOU

"If you can be anything, be kind."

UNKNOWN

"Act with kindness but do not expect gratitude."

CONFUCIUS

"Three things in human life are important. The first is to be kind. The second is to be kind. And the third is to be kind."

HENRY JAMES

"Kindness, nobler ever than revenge."

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

"Human kindness has never weakened the stamina or softened the fiber of a free people. A nation does not have to be cruel to be tough."

FRANKLIN D. ROOSEVELT

"You cannot do a kindness too soon, for you never know how soon it will be too late."

RALPH WALDO EMERSON

The Kindness Factor

A tendency toward kindness has remarkable rewards—both for individuals and for communities. Showing empathy has proven to be a marker for success, and random acts of kindness can have a profound impact on relationships. There's more.